From Sensitivity to Entitlements: The Case Against Closure

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Submitted for the degree of Master of Arts
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2nd of May, 2008
The denial of the epistemic closure principle (that we’re in a position to know all the logical consequences of what we do know) has most commonly been associated with the sensitivity theory of knowledge. According to sensitivity, you know some proposition $p$ if you believe it and if $p$ had been false, you wouldn’t have believed it. The first task of this thesis is to argue that the sensitivity theory and modal distance theories in general, suffer from serious shortcomings. However, the motivations which lead sensitivity theorists to reject closure are not specific to their theoretic machinery. The motivation is that knowledge seems to require that our reasons or evidence are somehow conducive to the truth of the purportedly known proposition, but if we want to avoid outright scepticism about commonsense facts, without giving up this plausible view about reasons, then it seems we must claim that we fail to know the falsity of sceptical hypotheses while also claiming that we do know many commonsense facts. This results in denying closure. The present case against closure appeals to this motivation but also goes beyond it. What I consider to be the most plausible way out of scepticism requires appealing to Wright’s (2004) notion of ‘unearned rational entitlements’. The central aim of this thesis is to argue that the most canonical understanding of the way entitlements figure in a theory of knowledge requires that we abandon closure.
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Statement

I declare that this thesis contains no material which has previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material which has previously been published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Leon Leontyev
1st of May 2008
Consider the following epistemic principle, which we shall call the closure of knowledge under entailment (CK):

If S knows that \( p \), and \( p \) entails \( q \), then S knows that \( q \).

Dretske (1970) famously argued that despite the apparent plausibility of CK there are strong reasons to reject it. The motivation for rejecting the closure principle can be seen as a way of getting out of the Sceptical Paradox. Let M be any mundane proposition that anyone of us may ordinarily be said to know, (e.g. I have hands). Let SH be a sceptical hypothesis that is incompatible with M, (e.g. I am a brain in a vat artificially stimulated to have all the experiences that I am actually having). Now consider the following incompatible set of claims:

1. I know that M.
2. I don’t know that not-SH.
3. If I don’t know that not-SH, then I don’t know that M.

The sceptic wants to reject (1). The Moorean wants to reject (2). Dretske’s proposal is to avoid this ‘Moorean impasse’ by rejecting (3). Most philosophers have balked at the idea of rejecting the closure principle. This incredulity can be gleamed from the following quote: “the idea that no version of this principle is true strikes me, and many other philosophers, as one of the least plausible ideas to come down the philosophical pike in recent years.” (Feldman 1995: 487).

Dretske has two main lines of attack on the closure principle. The first is to appeal to the apparent fact that one can have certain reasons or evidence for believing mundane propositions which at the same time do not seem to count as reasons or evidence for

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1 Of course Dretske (1970) is aware that CK is obviously false, and the principle he in fact wants to reject is that knowledge is not closed under known entailment. I address these complications in Chapter 2.
rejecting sceptical hypotheses incompatible with those same mundane propositions.² My experience of hands appears to count as evidence for believing I have hands, but surely not for believing that I am not a brain in a vat undergoing these same kinds of experiences (BIV). So when I infer from my belief that I have hands the claim that I am not a BIV, my evidence is neutralised across the inference.

The main problem with this kind of attack is that there is another way to interpret the datum. Perhaps there are some arguments which fail to transmit knowledge via valid inference, but this should not automatically lead us to conclude that knowledge is not closed under entailment. Transmission might fail while closure remains intact if one cannot know the premise without antecedently knowing the conclusion. This distinction was first registered by Wright (1985). Of course, the distinction itself does not say whether or not knowledge fails to be closed, but insofar as rejecting knowledge closure is as incredible as Feldman suggests, then interpreting the datum as (merely) transmission failure is the more intuitively conservative route to go. Wright himself appears to hold that we do know the falsity of sceptical hypotheses,³ however we have this knowledge not in virtue of any evidence that we have against them, and not by inferring their falsity from out apparent mundane knowledge, but in virtue of some kind of rational entitlement.

Dretske’s second line of attack on the closure principle appeals to the idea that to know some proposition $p$, one must (at least) be in possession of evidence that rules out all the relevant alternatives to $p$. Plausibly, to know that I have hands, I need not be able to rule out such outlandish possibilities as that I am a BIV. Nevertheless, seeing as I don’t have evidence against the possibility that I am a BIV, then I don’t know that I am not. The idea here is that which possibilities count as relevant for knowledge shifts with respect to the proposition that is being assessed. Call this the ‘proposition relative’ view of relevance.

There are two gaps with this way of arguing against the closure principle. The first gap is that a relevant alternatives account of knowledge does not mandate the rejection of closure. Indeed, there are two other ways apart from the one just sketched of

² Dretske appeals to this line of attack in his (1970), but it takes centre stage in his (2004).
³ There are problems of exogenosis on this point which I shall address in Chapter 4.
employing the relevant alternatives framework, neither of which requires that we reject closure. Essentially both of these other interpretations of the framework suggest that if an alternative is irrelevant then it is known to be false. However, one way to understand this suggestion is to claim that there is a set of possibilities which are always irrelevant to knowing. Call this the ‘rigid’ view of relevance. The other way to understand this suggestion is to claim that relevance shifts via some kind of contextual pressure such as salience. Call this the ‘shifty’ view of relevance. On the rigid view you know that you are not a BIV because that possibility is always irrelevant and therefore known to be false. On the shifty view you typically know that you’re not a BIV because this possibility is not salient, and in those instances you also know mundane propositions; however if the BIV possibility is somehow made salient, then you fail to know both that you’re not a BIV and that you have hands, so closure is kept intact across contexts.4

The second gap is that we need a principled account of relevance. The three models just sketched offer three different functions for determining relevance, but they are silent on what they function over. One of the most commonly held criterions of relevance in the literature of the past thirty years makes some kind of appeal to the modal distance of a possible world with respect to the actual world. According to this criterion what determines whether an alternative is relevant or irrelevant is somehow a function of its similarity to the actual world: if a possibility is not similar (not close) enough to the actual world then it is irrelevant. Naturally, there are three varieties of modal distance theories which correspond to three models of relevance sketched above.

The rejection of the closure principle has mostly been associated with a theory of knowledge which appeals to the modal distance account of relevance. There are two main factors responsible for this. The first is that Dretske (1971) offered a counterfactual analysis of knowledge, and two years later Lewis (1973) gave us a possible world semantics for counterfactuals, according to which a counterfactual sentence is true iff the world that is most similar to the actual world in which the antecedent is true is also a world in which the consequence true. The second is that Nozick (1981), the other arch-denier of closure, also proposed and finessed a counterfactual theory of knowledge, and

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4 I do not mention the third way of employing the relevant alternatives framework without rejecting closure which is simply to claim that all alternatives need to be ruled out for knowledge. This gets us to scepticism.
was largely responsible for laying down the course for modal epistemology for years to come. The Dretske-Nozick account of knowledge has, in recent years, gone under the name of ‘sensitivity’. Roughly, to be sensitive to some proposition \( p \) is to have a belief (or a reason for believing) that \( p \) such that, if \( p \) were false one wouldn’t have held the belief (or wouldn’t have had that reason for believing) that \( p \).

In this essay I intend to argue that denying closure is the most plausible way of avoiding scepticism.\(^5\) It seems implausible to me that we can know \textit{a posteriori} truths – the falsity of sceptical hypotheses – without having any evidence for them. It seems equally implausible to me that whether or not we know mundane truths is somehow vulnerable to the salience of sceptical possibilities. No other theory can rival such contextualism with respect to our intuitions about particular utterances of knowledge attribution, but contextualism is incompatible with our intuitions about knowledge on a broader scale; we take knowledge to be a property that agents have towards propositions independently of the context in which an attribution of knowledge is uttered, and in most cases independent of which possibilities of error are salient to the agent herself.\(^6\) And it seems to me that to give up our intuitions about particular cases of knowledge attribution is far less revisionary than to give up our intuitions about what knowledge is.

At the same time, I believe that the sensitivity theory, and with it the entire modal distance approach to epistemology is fundamentally flawed. The modal distance account gets its oomph from the idea that what makes sceptical possibilities irrelevant is the fact that they are very dissimilar to the actual world. However, recent counterexamples by Neta and Rohrbaugh (2004) and Comesana (2005) have cast some doubt on the necessity of that claim; sometimes sceptical possibilities aren’t far away at all, but intuitively they still don’t undermine knowledge. Perhaps even more strikingly there are many cases where some non-sceptical possibility clearly is relevant (by some intuitive standard) even though it is distant from the actual world.

In response to these considerations I will propose a criterion of relevance that makes sceptical (and only sceptical) possibilities irrelevant. Essentially the criterion is a

\(^5\) I do not intend to assess the plausibility of scepticism itself. My claim is that if we wish to avoid scepticism then our best course is to reject closure.

\(^6\) Except when thinking about certain possibilities erodes belief. We generally don’t think that (merely) thinking about error possibilities can erode one’s epistemic credentials.
straightforward appeal to Wright’s notion of entitlement; sceptical possibilities are irrelevant for knowing mundane propositions because we are rationally (though non-evidentially) entitled to presuppose that such possibilities are false. However, I will suggest that an entitlement to presuppose a proposition, when properly understood, does not allow us to know that proposition; it merely allows us to know the proposition for which it is acting as a presupposition. The best way to incorporate them into a theory of knowledge requires that we reject closure. Thus my thesis is the following conditional claim: insofar as entitlements give us the right criterion of relevance, then we ought to reject closure.

Chapter 1 examines and contrasts the three modal distance theories. I will show that the sensitivity theory is superior to its two rivals, but ultimately still fails for much the same reasons as its rivals. Chapter 2 looks at the closure principle, our intuitions in its favour, and the best way to formulate it. I will also consider and reject an argument by David and Warfield (forthcoming) which aims to show that there is no plausible version of the closure principle to which the sceptic can appeal in order to reach his conclusion. Chapter 3 deals with the issue of whether one can come to know that one is not a BIV via deduction from the (purportedly) known premise that one has hands, and also with other complexities within the debate on transmission failure. Naturally, I will claim that knowledge does not transmit in this instance. My aim is to gradually narrow down on the potential strategies for getting out of the Sceptical Paradox. In Chapter 4, I show how entitlements can be used in the relevant alternatives framework, and argue that this criterion of relevance strongly suggests, if not mandates, the rejection of closure. Finally, in the Epilogue, I offer a bunch of remarks about how the theory of knowledge I propose may potentially explain just what it is that causes the Sceptical Paradox to arise in the first place.
Chapter 1

Modal Distance Theories of Knowledge

1.1 Sensitivity. The simplest and most often cited formulation of the sensitivity condition – call it the simple sensitivity condition – is due to Nozick (1981):

SSC: If it weren’t the case that \( p \), then S wouldn’t have believed that \( p \).

\[ (\neg p \rightarrow \neg Bp) \]

You know that you are reading this paper because in all the closest possible worlds where you are not reading this paper, you do not believe that you are.\(^7\)

This condition accounts for Gettier-style counterexamples to the ‘true, justified belief’ theory of knowledge. Suppose that Smith, who lives on your street, has deceived you into thinking that he owns a Ford. You’re justified in believing this because you have seen him driving a Ford, and because he says he owns a Ford, and you haven’t known him to lie in the past. From this belief you infer that someone in your street owns a Ford. It so happens that Jerry, another person on your street, does own a Ford, but you had no idea about this. Still, your belief that someone in your street owns a Ford is true and justified, even though intuitively it is not a case of knowledge. The sensitivity theory respects this intuition because SSC is not satisfied. If it were the case that no one in your street owned a Ford, you would still believe that someone did. Given that Smith doesn’t actually own a Ford, but has misled you into thinking that he does, your belief with respect to him owning a Ford, and therefore with respect to someone in your street owning a Ford, would be exactly the same as in the actual world.

\(^7\) The sensitivity condition is certainly not intended to be sufficient for knowledge. The clearest case of that is that it cannot account for knowledge of necessary truths. Nozick introduces another condition on knowledge, the adherence condition, which is supposed to account for knowledge of necessary truths as well as fairly specific types of knowledge failure cases (e.g. the deceased dictator case). It is the sensitivity condition however, that does, and is intended to do, most of the work in Nozick’s account. Thus the sensitivity condition ought to be sufficient for all types of cases which the adherence condition is not intended to handle. I do not consider those cases of apparent knowledge failure which motivate the adherence condition to be clear cases of knowledge failure, and I do not think that the adherence condition gives an adequate explanation of how we come to know necessary truths. Thus, I shall not be addressing the adherence condition, and more over, I restrict myself to discussing knowledge of contingent, empirical truths.
SSC handles the infamous barns case. Henry is driving through the countryside, sees a barn, and comes to believe that he is seeing a barn. Unbeknownst to Henry, this countryside is replete with convincing papier-mâché barn facades, and what he is seeing is in fact the one and only real barn in the area. Intuitively it seems that Henry doesn’t know that he is seeing a barn, and SSC explains why. In some of the closest possible worlds where Henry is not seeing a barn, he is instead seeing a barn façade, and in those worlds, he’d still believe he is seeing a barn.

SSC leads to a direct violation of the closure principle. Sam is in a public zoo, standing at a pen that houses a zebra. He naturally comes to believe that the animal in the pen is a zebra, and this belief satisfies SSC. If this animal were not a zebra, but was a monkey, or a mule or any other ‘close’ possibility, he wouldn’t have believed that it was a zebra. Now something’s being a zebra entails that it is not a mule, and in particular, not a mule that has been cleverly disguised to look like a zebra. Suppose that Sam infers this from his belief that it is a zebra, and comes to believe that it is not a mule cleverly disguised to look like a zebra. However, if it were a mule cleverly disguised to look like a zebra, Sam would still believe that it wasn’t, so that belief doesn’t satisfy SSC. Closure violation results because strengthening the antecedent of a subjunctive conditional is not truth-preserving. There are some non-zebra worlds where Sam still believes that he is seeing a zebra, but in the case just described these do not fall within the range of closest possible worlds.

Later in this chapter we will discover that a sensitivity theory which employs SSC is prone to a number of simple counterexamples. A condition which gets somewhat closer to the mark, and which gives the same verdict on the cases discussed thus far, is Dretske’s (1971) conclusive reasons condition:

**CRC:** If it weren’t the case that \( p \), then \( S \) wouldn’t have had \( R \).

\[ \neg p \square \rightarrow \neg R. \]

\( R \) is the reason that \( S \) has for believing that \( p \) in the actual world. CRC yields exactly the same results as SSC in the cases so far considered. CRC is a theory of what makes a reason a **warranting reason** for \( p \). It is common to speak of warrant as whatever
conditions are necessary to turn a true belief into knowledge. This is not quite the sense in which CRC gives us warranting reasons. If S believes that \( p \) on the basis of a warranting reason R, then S has all it takes \textit{evidentially speaking}, to know that \( p \) (he might not have everything it takes to know that \( p \)). To distinguish this sense of a warranting reason from the traditional sense, I will call it an \textit{evidentially} warranting reason.

In this chapter I will compare the sensitivity account of knowledge with two other modal distance accounts that do not reject the closure principle: the safety theory and a modal distance version of contextualism. The aim of this comparison will be to bring out the intuitive differences in these three approaches, and to reveal the shortcomings of all such modal distance theories.

\textbf{1.2 Relevant differences about relevance.} In order to best appreciate the intuitive differences between sensitivity, safety and contextualism, it is useful to be explicit about their connection to the relevant alternatives framework. Roughly, according to this approach, one knows that \( p \), provided that one can ‘rule out’ all ‘relevant’ alternatives to \( p \). Sensitivity, safety and contextualism, all differ on what it takes for an alternative to be relevant. Before I explain how they differ on what it takes for an alternative to be relevant, it is worthwhile to say a bit about what it takes to \textit{rule out} an alternative. To rule out an alternative seems to be equivalent to \textit{knowing} that this alternative does not obtain. One might thus be tempted to think that describing knowledge in the language of relevant alternatives is uninformative. That would be a mistake. To know that a particular alternative to \( p \) does not obtain is more basic than to know that \( p \). You know that a particular alternative to \( p \) does not obtain when your evidence for \( p \) is incompatible with that possibility being actual. For instance, the evidence you have for thinking that you have hands is incompatible with any ‘handless’ possible world where nothing out of the ordinary is going on. In such worlds you would lack the sensory evidence of having hands, and so the evidence you actually \textit{do} have rules out such worlds from being actual. That’s all it takes for one to know that an alternative to \( p \) does not obtain. Even sceptics (at least some common types of sceptics) will admit that we can know that some alternatives to \( p \) do not obtain. However, a sceptic will insist that in order to know that \( p \) one must be able to rule out \textit{all} alternatives to \( p \). This is impossible if the proposition in
question is contingent and \textit{a posteriori}, for there is always a logical (and often physical) possibility where you have exactly the same evidence for \( p \) as you actually have even though \( p \) is false. The anti-sceptical strategy is to restrict the set of alternatives that need ruling out in order to possess knowledge.

According to the sensitivity theorist the relevant worlds are all the closest not-\( p \) worlds. Sam knows that “the animal in the pen is a zebra” because in all the closest possible worlds where “the animal in the pen is not a zebra” he fails to have the evidence that he has in the actual world. He doesn’t know that “the animal in the pen is not a mule cleverly disguised to look like a zebra” because the closest worlds where that’s false, will not be worlds that Sam can rule out on his current evidence. The disguised mule possibility is not close enough to be relevant in the first case, but is in the second.

One criticism that has been levelled against this way of restricting the relevancy set is that in many cases it forces us to count some very ‘distant’ worlds as relevant (Pritchard 2002: 223). For instance, when considering whether Sam knows that the animal in the pen is not a disguised mule, or that he is not a BIV, the sensitivity theorist requires the ruling out of possibilities that are highly implausible, dissimilar or what have you. According to Pritchard, this runs counter to the very intuition that knowledge requires the ruling out of relevant alternatives, for surely there is an intuition that distant worlds are not relevant. This is precisely the intuition that the safety theory latches onto. Sosa (1999) expresses safety as: S would believe that \( p \), only if it were so that \( p \). Alternatively: S would not have held the belief that \( p \) (or wouldn’t have easily held the belief that \( p \)) without it being the case that \( p \). In logical form it is expressed as a contraposition of sensitivity:

\[
Bp \quad \square \rightarrow p
\]

Of course, subjunctive conditionals do not validly contrapose. I read the safety condition as saying: in all of the nearby worlds where S believes that \( p \), \( p \) is true. (As with sensitivity, we may replace ‘\( Bp \)’ with ‘\( R \)’, where \( R \) is the reason that S has for believing \( p \).)
Thus, the safety rule of relevance is that, we count as relevant all the nearby worlds where you believe that \( p \), (or where you still have the same reasons or evidence as you do in the actual world). If any of these worlds should happen to be worlds where \( p \) is false, then you don’t know that \( p \). The closeness of the worlds that are relevant is kept constant, irrespective of what proposition is being considered. So even when we’re deciding whether Sam knows that “the animal in the pen is not a mule painted to look like a zebra” worlds where there is such a mule in the pen are irrelevant, according to the safety theorist, because they’re too dissimilar, or too ‘distant’, from the actual world. Therefore, unlike sensitivity, safety respects the closure principle.

There appears to be a genuine clash of intuitions here. On the one hand, the safety theorist insists that relevance should be cashed out purely in terms of closeness to the actual world, irrespective of which proposition is the object of the knowledge attribution. Why think that the proposition in question should dictate how distant worlds must be for them to be considered irrelevant? On the other hand it sounds odd to suggest that Sam could know that the animal in the pen is not a mule cleverly disguised to look like a zebra without having to rule out any such possibility. So perhaps the proposition in question is somehow important in deciding the relevancy set.

Perhaps contextualism can explain this clash of intuitions. The main tenet of contextualism is that the epistemic standards that one must meet in order to know are not stable and invariant, but shift depending on the salience of a possibility of error in the conversational context. The context relevant to the assessment of a knowledge claim is the context of the attributer of knowledge, rather than the subject of the knowledge attribution (except in those cases where the attributor is also the subject). Thus, if you’re in a zoo looking at a zebra while taking seriously the possibility that it might instead be a mule cleverly disguised to look like a zebra, and you’re wondering whether

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8 This is in fact necessary for otherwise safety falls prey to some very simple objections, just like sensitivity.
9 This, of course, is what is achieved by contraposing the sensitivity condition.
10 Hawthorne (2004) holds a theory he calls sensitive moderate invariantism (SMI), which is not contextualist in the sense that the conversational context of the attributer does not set the standards for knowing, but does share the aspect of contextualism whereby whether a subject knows depends on the salience of alternative possibilities. The difference is that according to SMI, what matters is the salience of these possibilities to the subject of the knowledge attribution, rather than the attributer. Much of what I say in regards to contextualism will apply equally to SMI, as they are both shifty views of relevance.
your friend Sam (who is not thinking about this possibility) knows that the animal in the pen is a zebra, then it would most likely be false for you to say that Sam knows that the animal is a zebra. I say ‘most likely’ false, because it may well be that Sam has the necessary discriminatory capacity to distinguish between zebras and mules cleverly painted to look like zebras. If he does have this capacity, then despite the fact that he is being judged from an unusually high epistemic standard, he still knows. What varies with context is the salience of error possibilities that are relevant for assessing whether the subject knows, but whether the subject actually knows depends on his discriminatory capacities and the quality of his evidence in eliminating these error possibilities. The context of the attributer sets the standard that must be met by the subject, but whether or not the subject actually meets that standard depends on the (non-contextual) properties of the subject.¹¹

The contextualist can resolve the conflict of intuitions between safety and sensitivity in the following way. He can claim that the sensitivity intuition arises from the fact that we’re counting the possibility of the animal being a cleverly disguised mule as legitimate. In other words, in assessing whether Sam knows that the animal is not a disguised mule, we have made the possibility of it being a disguised mule salient, and therefore relevant. The closeness of a possible world is surely an important factor in restricting the relevancy set, the contextualist might say, but when a possibility is salient, it infiltrates the relevancy set irrespective of its modal distance. Thus, the sensitivity theorist’s intuition – that the proposition being considered must affect the relevance set – is explained by the contextualist as the effect that salience has on relevance.

This claim on the part of the contextualist can be resisted by invariantists like the safety and the sensitivity theorists. They can simply dig their heels in and claim that knowledge cannot ‘evaporate’ by the mentioning of far off possibilities. We either had it all along, or we never had it. (This adds another conflicting intuition into the mix). Unfortunately, the safety theorist seems to be a little better off at this stage of the dialectic. While salience may or may not determine which possibilities are relevant,

¹¹ One might claim that whether the subject meets the standards depends not only on his properties, but also on the external properties of his current environment. However, even if the contextualist is also an externalist, it is better to think of external factors contributing not to whether the standard has been met, but to the standard itself. In other words, external factors can also introduce error possibilities on top of those that are salient.
salience certainly infects our intuitions or gut reactions about which possibilities are relevant. This is precisely why sceptical arguments appear so persuasive. But if that’s so, then perhaps what makes us tempted to say that for a subject to know that $p$ he must be able to rule out the closest not-$p$ worlds has nothing to do with the truth of sensitivity, but simply that the very mentioning of $p$ makes the closest not-$p$ worlds salient. That is, as soon as I ask the question, “does S know that the animal in the pen is not a mule painted to look like a zebra?” I have immediately made the painted mule possibility salient, and therefore relevant.

This presents a challenge for the sensitivity theorist. Since he repudiates salience as a general principle for determining relevance, he must have some other reason, independent of salience, as to why the closest not-$p$ worlds are relevant. I believe this challenge can be met, though I shall do so in a slightly round-about way. This principle is best illustrated in the light of some misgivings that I have about the safety and contextualist principles of relevancy.

1.3 The motivation for sensitivity. There is in fact a lot of similarity between safety and contextualism. The contextualist agrees with the safety theorist that we normally know that sceptical hypotheses are false; it is just that according to safety, we always know them, whereas according to contextualism, we cease to know them in those rare moments when they are made salient (see for instance DeRose 1995: 39-40). But what is it that licences the contextualist to say that we know the falsity of sceptical hypotheses when they are not salient? Surely not all possibilities that fail to be salient are irrelevant. If Henry is driving through fake-barn country, and happens to spot the only real barn in the area, he does not know it is a barn whether or not the possibility of fake barns is salient (for him or the attributer of knowledge). The contextualist would have to say that this possibility is close enough to actuality to be relevant despite not being salient; however, when the world is not conspiring to deceive us (as it is in the barns case), such deceitful possibilities are no longer close enough to actuality to be relevant unless they are made salient.12 Both the safety theorist and contextualist agree that when a possibility is not

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12 This exposition of contextualism most closely resembles DeRose (1995). According to DeRose the SSC has a part to play in knowledge, but only as part of a contextualist strategy. When it is asserted that “S
salient its relevance depends on whether or not it is ‘near enough’ to actuality, independently of which proposition is being purported as known. What they disagree on is whether salience can make distant worlds relevant. Thus, contextualism presupposes a safety account of knowledge when the salience of sceptical hypotheses is not at issue. Any problems that affect safety will therefore also affect contextualism provided that the contextual standard remains normal (i.e. isn’t inflated by the salience of far-off possibilities).

Here is the main problem with safety (and by extension with modal distance contextualism). On the safety account it can be possible to know that \( p \) on the basis of terrible and irrelevant reasons, or without having any reasons at all. Call a proposition *modally robust* if it would not easily be false. By hypothesis, that I am not a brain in a vat is a modally robust proposition, as is the proposition that the earth revolves around the sun and that the USA did not win the 2006 World Cup in soccer. Such propositions are true in all of the closest worlds. Given that these propositions are modally robust, one’s beliefs in such propositions are always safe regardless of how good one’s reasons are for believing them. Consequently, safety makes our reasons irrelevant to the epistemic status of beliefs which express modally robust propositions.

With this criticism in hand, we now have a principled reason, independent of salience, for counting the nearest counter-possibility to a purported case of knowledge as relevant to assessing the knowledge claim. A necessary condition for knowledge seems to be that our reasons or evidence must somehow make a difference to whether or not we know. Thus, even though the closest counter-possibility will sometimes take us out to very distant worlds, we must accept such possibilities as relevant if we want our reasons or evidence to always contribute to the epistemic status of our beliefs.

knows that \( p \)” this will be true provided that S can rule out the closest not-\( p \) worlds, but within any given context S’s epistemic position with respect to \( p \) will be at least as strong as his epistemic position with respect to any logical consequence of \( p \). Thus, if M entails not-SH, and it is asserted that S knows that M, it is true that S knows that M and that not-SH, but if it were asserted that S knows not-SH (thus raising the epistemic standard), then he will know neither. DeRose’s theory is thus a compromise between safety and sensitivity. In order to know that \( p \) when it is asserted that S knows that \( p \), S needs to be sensitive to \( p \). If \( q \) is a consequence of \( p \) that is not asserted, then one will know that \( q \) provided that one’s belief that \( q \) is ‘safe enough’, that is, true out to the nearest not-\( p \) worlds.
Having for the moment secured the motivation for taking seriously the sensitivity criterion of relevance let us consider safety (and criticisms thereof) a little further. Now the objection I put forward against safety does not show that safety is not necessary for knowledge; it may merely be insufficient. However, the criticism does pose an immediate threat to the entire motivation for going with safety. The motivation, I take it, is that safety offers a seemingly plausible way by which we may know that sceptical hypotheses are false. However, it also seems that the principle by which we come to know that sceptical hypotheses are false is exactly the same principle which makes reasons irrelevant to the epistemic status of any modally robust belief. So even if we could patch up the theory so that it gives a plausible story about when we know or don’t know the truth of modally robust propositions, to do so would be to abandon the principle which was intended to do a lot of work for the safety theorist. I suppose that the safety theorist could keep this principle only for anti-sceptical propositions, while telling some other story about modally robust propositions in general, but this would be entirely ad hoc. So while my objection does not show that safety is not necessary for knowledge, seeing as it undermines the motivation for going with safety, we have a prima facie case for thinking it isn’t necessary either.

In any case, how might the safety theorist patch up his theory? My objection was that in the case of modally robust propositions a belief will count as knowledge (according to safety) despite the subject having no (good) reasons for that belief. A natural remedy to this problem might be to bring in an extra requirement on knowledge such as justification or reliability.

There are obvious reasons why the extra justification condition will not do. Suppose that Billy has no good reason to believe that the USA didn’t win the 2006 Soccer World Cup, but he is justified in believing that Jones owns a Ford despite the fact that Jones doesn’t own a Ford. From his false, but justified belief that Jones owns a Ford he infers that either Jones owns a Ford or USA didn’t win the World Cup. This belief is justified and safe (seeing as the disjunction will be true in all the nearby worlds), but obviously not a case of knowledge.

On the face of it, reliabilism isn’t likely to do any better in rescuing the safety theory. Take, for instance, the fake-barn case. A plausible description of the case is that
Henry’s belief that there is a barn before him is formed on the basis of a reliable process, namely his vision, but intuitively it is not a case of knowledge. Now on the one hand combining safety with process reliabilism does seem to get the right result, for Henry’s belief is not safe. Unfortunately, the same problem can arise for Henry as it did for Billy. If Henry infers from his belief that there is a barn before him, that either there is a barn before him or the USA did not win the World Cup (and he has absolutely no reason to believe the second disjunct), then the resulting disjunctive belief will be both reliably formed as well as safe. Intuitively however, it is still not a case of knowledge.

Now certainly there are ways of forming the reliability criterion that makes beliefs formed on the basis of a reliable process not open to any Gettier-like cases. The most successful attempt at this gives a modal analysis of reliability. As Goldman put it, “a cognitive mechanism or process is reliable if it not only produces true beliefs in actual situations, but would produce true beliefs, or at least inhibit false beliefs, in relevant counterfactual situations” (1976: 771). One understanding of this proposal is simply that if a particular belief that p is formed via cognitive process M then in all the nearby worlds where that belief is formed via M p is true. The problem with this proposal is that is essentially the same version of safety that we’ve been considering all along, and it does not get around the problem of modally robust propositions. An alternative understanding of this proposal is that what counts as being safe is not a particular belief, but the process of belief formation itself. In other words, if you arrive at the belief that p via process M, then you know that p provided that M is the kind of process which yields truths in all the nearby worlds about all sorts of propositions. And now this looks like it may get the safety theorist out of trouble, for the problem with modally robust propositions was precisely that one can have safe beliefs in such propositions despite arriving at these beliefs via a dubious route. The difficulty with this proposal is that it is too strong

Suppose that Henry is not in fake-barn country; he is instead in fake-tree country. He sees a barn and forms the belief that there is a barn before him via the visual cognitive process. Has he formed this belief via a reliable process? Well it is certainly reliable with respect to beliefs about the presence of barns, but presumably not reliable with respect to beliefs about the presence of trees. There are close possible worlds in which this process yields false beliefs (about the presence of trees).
Perhaps the process need not produce true beliefs in all the nearby worlds, but in most of them. Call this notion safety*. This however will not work for the original fake-barns problem. Presumably, when Henry is in fake-barn country and forms the belief that there is a barn before him by seeing the barn, the process by which he forms the belief will mostly produce true beliefs (if we include all sorts of propositions apart from those pertaining to the presence of barns) in nearby counterfactual situations. So what is needed for this suggestion to work is that the belief itself be safe (true in all the nearby worlds), and the process by which it is formed be safe* (true in most of the nearby worlds). But now we’ve just retreated back into the Gettler problem. If Henry forms the belief that there is a barn before him (in fake barn country), and then infers that either there is a barn before him or the USA didn’t win the world cup, then the inferred belief is safe, and the processes by which it is formed are safe*. The belief is safe because it is modally robust and the processes by which it is formed (visual perception and valid inference) are both process which produce mostly true beliefs. I submit then, that safety is not sufficient for knowledge of modally robust propositions, nor are there any obvious ways of patching it up.

1.5 Problems for modal distance (and other kinds of) contextualism. Earlier I said that whatever objection we find to safety will apply equally well to modal distance contextualism, provided that the contextual standard remains normal. One might therefore object that my counterexamples to the sufficiency of safety raise the standards that we need to meet in order to know. The idea is that while we ordinarily know all modally robust propositions, when we assert such claims, we raise the standards to the point where we don’t know them (unless we can rule out the closest worlds where they are false). I think this in itself speaks against contextualism. As we shall see below, while it may be reasonable to suppose that our knowledge of anti-sceptical propositions varies with context, it is most implausible that the same goes for other modally robust propositions. Problems for contextualism don’t stop there. I also argue below that any principle to which the contextualist might appeal in order to distinguish between
alternatives that are always relevant and those that vary with context ought to be good enough for us not to have to appeal to contextualism.\textsuperscript{13}

It seems to me that if contextualism is true, then whenever I am contemplating the possibility that I might be a BIV, I should immediately be prepared to give up the claim that I know I have hands. I do not share this intuition. While I recognise that if I don’t know that I am not a BIV, then it seems that I don’t know that I have hands, and while I recognise that it seems like I don’t know that I am not a BIV, for all that, it does not seem to me that I don’t know that I have hands. I find myself befuddled. However, if contextualism is true, I ought not to be befuddled. I ought to just surrender my knowledge without resistance. Now DeRose is keenly aware of this problem, to which he gives the following response (where O = an ordinary proposition such as ‘I have hands’):

Even while we’re in a context governed by high standards at which we don’t count as knowing that O, we at the same time realize that as soon as we find ourselves in more ordinary conversational contexts, it will not only be true for us to claim that to know these very Os that the skeptic now denies we know, but it will also be wrong for us to deny that we know these things. It’s easy, then, to think that the skeptic’s present denial must be equally false and that it would be equally true for us now, in the skeptic’s presence, to claim to know that O. (1995: 41).\textsuperscript{14}

There are two problems with this response. Firstly, in order for us to realise that as soon as we find ourselves in more ordinary contexts it will be true to say that we know we have hands then we must have some competence at recognising the shifting standards in knowledge. However, if we have such competence, then it is no longer apparent why we make the mistake of thinking that the sceptic’s present denial must be false. If DeRose wants to deny that this realisation about what happens in ordinary contexts requires competence at recognising the shifting standards of knowledge, then the source of this apparent realisation is simply not obvious, and his conjecture too \textit{ad hoc}.

\textsuperscript{13} The objections I offer below affect versions of contextualism other than the one I’ve been considering. The contextualism I’ve been considering is that when a possibility $q$ is made salient, and if it conflicts with some proposition $p$ that S is said to know, then S knows $p$ iff he can rule-out all the alternative possibilities that go out as far as the closest $q$ world. This is DeRose’s view (1995). Lewis (1996) however, insist merely that the subject be capable of ruling out the salient possibility, not that he rules out all the possibilities that are as far from the actual world as the salient possibility.

\textsuperscript{14} This response seems unavailable to a defender of Lewis’s form of contextualism because he makes no appeal to varying ‘standards’.
Secondly, it is easy to think of cases where standards appear to be raised (by the contextualist’s criteria) but where we do not refrain from admitting that we fail to know. Suppose you’re investigating the murder of Smith, and all of your evidence, which includes finger prints and DNA, points to Serge. Suppose further that, as a matter of fact Serge did commit the murder (call this hypothesis H1), but he also has a long, lost identical twin brother Nicoli, and if Nicoli had murdered Smith (call this hypothesis H2) then the fingerprints and DNA would be the same. As a matter of fact Nicoli died some years back in the mountains of Tibet, so the closest possible worlds where H1 is false are not worlds where Nicoli murders Smith, but are instead worlds where Smith isn’t murdered. Suppose that you discover that Serge has an identical twin, but not that he died. Now by DeRose’s lights, when H2 infiltrates the context, in order to know that H1 is true, your belief (or evidence) must co-vary with the truth of H1 up until the closest H2 world. This means that as soon as H2 becomes salient one ceases to know H1; so far, so good. The problem is that, in this instance, there is no tendency to think that you still know H1 when H2 becomes salient. Moreover, as soon as you discover that Serge has a twin brother, our reaction is that you never knew that Serge murdered Smith, and even if H2 stopped being salient, it seems wrong to say that you do know H1. You won’t know H1 until you have reason for thinking that H2 is false (such as by discovering that Nicoli died some while back). What distinguishes H2 from the BIV case? Obviously H2 is not a sceptical hypothesis, but the question is, what can the contextualist appeal to in order to distinguish hypotheses like H2 from sceptical hypotheses?

This is immediately a big problem for DeRose. On his theory, you know that H1 up until you discover that Serge has a twin brother, and that if H2 stops being salient, H1 is once again known.15 Both results are counterintuitive. Lewis (1996) however, can appeal to his ‘rule of belief’, which goes something like this: if a subject believes or ought to believe that some possibility may obtain, then he cannot ‘properly ignore’ that possibility (i.e. treat it as irrelevant).16 I agree that in the case above, you ought to believe

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15 This is a problem that DeRose shares with the safety theorist and, as we shall soon see, with the sensitivity theorist as well, though for DeRose it runs a little deeper (in virtue of his contextualism).

16 Lewis (1996:555) actually says “A possibility that the subject believes to obtain is not properly ignored, whether or not he is right to so believe. Neither is one that he ought to believe to obtain—one that evidence and arguments justify him in believing—whether or not he does so believe” (my emphasis). However, he then goes on to say that you need merely a degree of belief that is sufficiently high to think that possibility
that $H_2$ may obtain, while you are permitted to ignore $H_3$: that aliens murdered Smith and planted Serge’s fingerprints and DNA. However, there is still a problem for Lewis. He cashes out the ‘ought’ with justification: you may not properly ignore a possibility if you have justification for believing that it may obtain. Now, if $R$ justifies thinking that $H_2$ may obtain, then it also justifies that ‘$H_2$ or $H_3$’ may obtain. However, if you did believe that ‘$H_2$ or $H_3$’ may obtain (and it is after all what you ought to believe) then you would not be able to ignore $H_3$ (because it would become salient for you). In other words, Lewis has an idealisation in his account, such that, any agent who actually met this idealisation, wouldn’t know anything.

The bigger problem – and this is a deep problem for all contextualists – is that if there is some (perhaps better) way to spell out this ‘ought’, if, in other words, there is a principle by which possibilities like $H_2$ are always relevant (to knowing whether or not $H_1$), but possibilities like $H_3$ are only relevant when they are salient, then it is not apparent why salience should matter at all. So we’re confronted with the sceptical argument, we admit its validity and the intuitiveness of each of the premises but we’re still not prepared to admit the conclusion. Nor should we; we should just appeal to whichever principle the contextualist needs for distinguishing between those possibilities which are always relevant from those that are only relevant when salient, as a way of defending the claim that we do know the mundane proposition. We can appeal to this principle as the grounds for ignoring – though more precisely, not bothering about – certain possibilities incompatible with $M$.\textsuperscript{17} If the principle is good enough to permit us to not bother about sceptical (and only sceptical) possibilities when those are not salient, then there is no reason why it isn’t good enough to permit us not to bother about them when they are salient.

Contextualists typically claim that theirs is the best solution to scepticism because it explains why the sceptical argument seems so compelling: it is, after all, a sound obtains. I’ve interpreted that as believing that a possibility ‘may’ obtain, which I think is equivalent enough to a partial belief that it does obtain.

\textsuperscript{17} Thus we can agree with Lewis that “when we say that a possibility is properly ignored, we mean exactly that; we do not mean that it could have been properly ignored. Accordingly, a possibility not ignored at all is ipso facto not properly ignored. What is and what is not being ignored is a feature of the particular conversational context,” without agreeing that any possibility to which we attend is necessarily a relevant possibility. We simply need a good enough principle for not bothering about certain possibilities. For the most part however, I will be sloppy and use the word ‘ignore’ to mean ‘not bother about’.
argument—psst!—relative to the contextual standard in which it is propounded. This is what they grant to the sceptic. At the same time, their response to the sceptic is something like: “what you fail to realise, Mr Sceptic, is that in ordinary contexts we don’t need to rule out your sceptical possibilities.” But this is a normative claim and requires a normative principle. Let’s suppose that contextualists have this principle. What the contextualist nonetheless lacks is another normative principle which gets him from “we are permitted to not bother about sceptical (and only sceptical) possibilities when they aren’t salient” to “we are not permitted to not bother about sceptical possibilities when they are salient”. Thus the contextualist needs two normative principles to get his theory working, while the invariantist only needs one. Moreover, the contextualist’s response to the sceptic can be appropriated by the invariantist (with some modification) to explain why we find the sceptic’s argument so compelling. According to the contextualist the sceptic fails to realise that (by some principle) his hypotheses need not be ruled out in ordinary contexts. According to the invariantist what we all fail to realise is that his hypotheses need not be ruled out in any context. We find his argument compelling because we’re not aware of the principle by which we’re permitted to not bother about sceptical hypotheses. Even if we discovered this principle, (presumably after doing a lot of philosophy), we may still find his argument compelling simply by virtue of the fact that being a competent user of the word ‘knowledge’ doesn’t seem to require being aware of this principle.

1.6 *Two popular objections to sensitivity that can be solved.* I have identified a number of problems for safety, and even more problems for contextualism. It is now time to turn our attention back to sensitivity. While I think that sensitivity is ultimately a mistaken theory, it seems to me that a number of objections against it have been overstated in an impatient attempt to bury it for its heretical rejection of the closure principle. So before I set about burying it myself, I will respond to two objections on its behalf, which a number of writers consider to be decisive.

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18 Other than the sensitive moderate invariantist who also has to explain why the principle which warrants us in ignoring sceptical hypotheses in ordinary contexts isn’t similarly good enough to warrant ignoring them in contexts when these hypotheses are salient.
1.6.1 *The reflectivity objection.* Sosa (1996; 1999; 2004) and Vogel (2000; 2007) put forward a rather powerful objection against sensitivity, what I call the reflectivity objection (RO).\(^{19}\) Both Vogel and Sosa develop RO against the SSC version of sensitivity, but they believe that the objection shows that no sensitivity condition, including CRC, can be necessary for knowledge. The objection against SSC goes something like this. Suppose we have two (contingent) propositions:

1. \(p\)
2. I don’t falsely believe that \(p \sim (Bp \& \sim p)\)

According to Sosa, “no-one minimally rational and attentive who believes both of these will normally know either without knowing the other.” (199: 145). This appears plausible. Knowing (2) does not seem to be any more epistemically demanding than knowing (1), (apart from needing to reflect on one’s own mental states). In affirming (2), one is not required to produce any reasons that one is not already required to produce in affirming (1). From this it follows that *at the very least* it should be possible for one to *sometimes* know (2) if one knows (1). Sosa (1999: 145) then goes on to say “yet even in cases where one’s belief of (1) is sensitive, one’s belief of (2) could never be sensitive. After all, even if (2) were false, one would still believe it anyhow.” In other words, for the SSC to be met the following counterfactual needs to be true:

\[
\text{RO-SSC: } Bp \& \sim p \rightarrow \sim B(\sim (Bp \& \sim p))
\]

RO-SSC says that if I were to falsely believe \(p\), I wouldn’t believe that I don’t falsely believe that \(p\). Sosa is claiming that this can never be true presumably because if I were to believe that \(p\) I would still believe that I don’t falsely believe that \(p\). So if Sosa is right, then it seems that on the sensitivity theory you could *never* know a proposition like (2)

\(^{19}\) It’s also found in DeRose (1995) although, unlike Vogel and Sosa, he does not consider it to be decisive, and puts it off for future consideration. There is also a predecessor to this objection in Vogel (1987).
despite the fact that you know (1), irrespective of how good your evidence or epistemic position happens to be.

This sounds like a powerful objection indeed, but why should we accept the claim that RO-SSC can never be satisfied? Vogel (2000: 610) puts it like this: “it is difficult to conceive of your not believing that something you believe is true whenever the thought happens to cross your mind. So if your belief that…[p]…were false, you would still believe that your belief was true, not false.” Someone might object to Vogel that the second claim doesn’t follow from the first. If your belief that \( p \) were false it may just be that the higher-order thought simply doesn’t cross your mind in that counterfactual situation (even if it does in the actual world). Consider the following variant of Vogel’s New Shoes Case. Suppose that your long time and trusted friend Omar tells you that he bought a new pair of shoes and you come to believe that

\[(1a) \quad \text{Omar has new shoes}\]

This is all in fact perfectly true, and so it seems like a standard case of knowledge gained on the basis of testimony. Suppose further that (in the actual world) you reflect on your belief that (1a) and come to believe:

\[(2a) \quad \text{I don’t falsely believe that Omar has new shoes}\]

Does it follow that if you believed (1a) falsely that you would also come to believe (2a)? It is far from obvious that you would. Since in the actual world, you form the belief that (1a) via the reliable method of Omar’s testimony, it seems implausible that the closest worlds where you come to believe (1a) will be worlds where you come to believe it because of Omar’s testimony. Perhaps they will instead be worlds where you see Omar in shoes that merely appear new (a common enough mistake). In any case, given that your belief that (1a) in the counterfactual worlds is a completely different psychological event to your belief that (1a) in the actual world, it is far from clear that despite the fact that you formed the belief that (2a) in the actual world that you would also form this belief in the counterfactual worlds.
I don’t think that this allows us to get out of the objection. After all, the way we’ve been understanding counterfactuals is by considering not only the single closest antecedent world, but a band of closest worlds, and it doesn’t seem like a far departure from actuality that you do in fact come to believe that you don’t falsely believe (1a). That is, I’m assuming that we’re all willing to believe ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\) whenever we believe that \(p\), and thus could easily do so. So RO-SSC does seem to be unsatisfiable after-all. Salerno (forthcoming) argues that if (in the actual world) S corroborates her belief that \(p\) by an independent method, and on that basis comes to believe that ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\), then plausibly, the closest worlds where she believes \(p\) falsely, are worlds where there would be no corroboration from the independent method, and so she wouldn’t have come to believe that ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\). This however does not change the fact that if S believes that \(p\) then she \textit{ought} to believe ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\) whether or not her independent method corroborated her belief. If she does not, then she is not being ‘sufficiently rational’, in which case she is not the kind of agent who is relevant to Sosa’s and Vogel’s objection. After all, if one \textit{genuinely} believes that \(p\), then one cannot rationally withhold judgement about ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\), and any sufficiently rational and reflective agent will form the belief that ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\) in some of the closest Bp&~p worlds (if they’re able to form such beliefs in the actual world).

I believe that RO is a decisive objection against the necessity of SSC. However, it is necessary to keep in the open the starting assumptions that allow Sosa and Vogel to arrive at this conclusion. If we keep these assumptions explicit, then I think it becomes fairly clear that despite what Sosa and Vogel claim, RO or any of its variants fail to show that CRC is not necessary for knowledge. The assumptions that I take Sosa and Vogel to rely on are these:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textbf{A1:} If S believes that \(p\), and he is sufficiently rational and reflective, he will come to believe that ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\) whenever the thought happens to cross his mind.
  
  \item \textbf{A2:} It is (at the very least) sometimes possible to come to know ~\((Bp\&\neg p)\) if one already knows that \(p\) merely by reflecting on one’s belief that \(p\).
\end{enumerate}
From A1 we can derive the claim that RO-SSC can’t be satisfied. From A2 and the claim that RO-SSC can’t be satisfied we get the conclusion that SSC is not necessary for knowledge.

Before I go on to argue that RO fails to show that CRC is not necessary, it is worth noting that RO is not supposed to rely on the closure principle. Even though \( p \) entails \( \neg(Bp \& \neg p) \), Sosa and Vogel’s claim that you know \( \neg(Bp \& \neg p) \) if you know \( p \) cannot rest on closure. Similarly, if \( \neg(Bp \& \neg p) \) were the denial of a sceptical hypothesis then it also would not be much of an objection. Not only do sensitivity theorists already reject closure and claim that we don’t know the denials of sceptical hypotheses, but intuitively, to know the denial of a sceptical hypothesis does seem more epistemically demanding than to know a commonsense proposition, at least when you don’t explicitly compare them side by side. But I take it that what makes RO a powerful objection is precisely that knowing \( \neg(Bp \& \neg p) \) doesn’t seem like it ought to be more demanding than knowing that \( p \).\(^{20}\) If someone asks “what makes you think that you don’t falsely believe that \( p \)” it seems perfectly reasonable to respond “because I have such and such a reason in support of \( p \).” That is, to ask “what makes you think that you don’t falsely believe that \( p \)” does not demand any more information than asking “what makes you think that \( p \)” . On these grounds, the fact that RO-SSC can’t be satisfied does seem like a very embarrassing consequence for anyone who thinks that SSC is necessary for knowledge. However, most sensitivity theorists hold something more like CRC.

From the paragraph above it should be easy enough to see that \( \neg(Bp \& \neg p) \) is knowable if CRC is sufficient for knowledge. If someone asks “what makes you think that you don’t falsely believe that \( p \)” you could also respond with “if I had a false belief that \( p \), then I wouldn’t have the reasons I actually have for believing it.” The condition that needs to be met is:

\[
\text{RO-CRC:} \quad Bp \& \neg p \implies \neg R
\]

\(^{20}\) No more epistemically demanding apart from the need to introspect on ones mental states. In this respect knowing \( \neg(Bp \& \neg p) \) is more epistemically demanding than knowing \( p \), but this is not the same respect in which it seems harder to know that you’re not in a sceptical scenario than to know that you have hands.
Clearly this is easy enough to meet in our variant of the New Shoes Case. As already suggested, the closest worlds where \(2a\) is true will not be worlds where Omar – who in the actual world is reliable and trustworthy – would lie about having new shoes. They will instead be worlds where you have some other kind of reason for believing \(1a\) and therefore \(2a\) (such as seeing him in shoes which merely look new). As such, even though you would still believe \(2a\) in such worlds, you wouldn’t believe it for the same reasons as in the actual world.\(^{21}\)

In any case, if CRC (or something sufficiently like it) is necessary for knowledge, then we can know propositions like \(2\). The fact is that worlds where you falsely believe \(p\) need not be (and when you know that \(p\) would not be) worlds where you have the same reasons for believing \(p\) or \(\neg(Bp \& \neg p)\). This is no doubt why Vogel (2000, footnote 18; 2007, footnote 12) modifies his objection to CRC by modifying the proposition to be known from ‘I do not falsely believe that \(p\)’ to:

\[(2') \quad \text{I do not falsely believe that } p \text{ for reason } R, \neg(Bp \text{ via } R \wedge \neg p).\]^ {22}

The new reflectivity objection, which we may call RO’, is that, intuitively, it is possible to know \(2'\) if \(1\) is known, but that it is impossible to have conclusive reasons for believing \(2'\). Let \(R_A\) be one’s reason for believing \(1\) and \(R_B\) one’s reason for believing \(2'\). For RO’ to be successful the following counterfactual must be unsatisfiable:

\[\text{RO’-CRC: } \quad Bp \text{ via } R_A \wedge \neg p \quad \rightarrow \quad \neg R_B\]

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\(^{21}\) Sosa (2004) claims that RO does work against CRC. However, his reason for this is that RO works against Nozick’s version of sensitivity relativised to methods, which is often considered to be equivalent to Dretske’s. However, in section 1.7 I will show that Nozick’s and Dretske’s conditions are not equivalent. The fact that RO doesn’t work against CRC, but does work against Nozick’s condition, is a sign of that.

\(^{22}\) Vogel casts his objection not against CRC, but against his interpretation of Nozick’s tracking condition with methods fixed: If \(P\) were false, \(S\) would not believe that \(P\) via method \(M\) (where \(M\) is the method by which \(S\) actually comes to believe that \(P\)) (Vogel 2007: 74). So his modification of \(2'\) is actually ‘\(S\) does not falsely believe that \(p\) via method \(M\)’. This is not how Nozick himself formulates his condition, but if he did, then for all intents and purposes it would be exactly the same as CRC, (at least if methods are individuated as finely as reasons).
Furthermore RO’ must make equivalent assumptions to RO, now taking reasons into account, where R1 = one’s reason for believing $p$, and R2 = R1 + being aware of having R1 as a reason for $p$.

A1’: If S believes that $p$ on the basis of R1, and he is sufficiently rational and reflective, he will come to believe that $\neg(Bp \text{ via } R1 \& \neg p)$, whenever the thought happens to cross his mind, simply on the basis R2.

A2’: It is (at the very least) sometimes possible to come to know $\neg(Bp \text{ via } R1 \& \neg p)$ if one already knows that $p$ on the basis of R1, merely on the basis of R2.

So the objection says (roughly) that RO’-CRC is unsatisfiable given A1’, and that CRC is not necessary for knowledge given A2’. I will assume, without further argument, that if one believes (1) on the basis of R1, then there are very close possible worlds where one believes (2’) merely on the basis of R2. That is, I’m assuming that we’re all willing to believe $\neg(Bp \text{ via } R1 \& \neg p)$ simply on the basis of R2 and that if we believe $p$ on the basis of R1 we could easily come into possession of R2. As such, it does seem that RO’-CRC is unsatisfiable, at least when $R_B = R_2$. ($R_A = R_1$ by stipulation).

The New Shoes Case can demonstrate this reasoning. Recall that you believe (1a) – that Omar has a new pair of shoes – on the basis of Omar’s (trustworthy) testimony. Furthermore, we may suppose that you believe:

(2a’) I don’t falsely believe that Omar has new shoes on the basis of his testimony.

And you believe (2a’) simply on the basis of being aware of holding (1a) on the basis of Omar’s testimony. Now if (2a’) were false, that is, if you did falsely believe (1a) on the basis of Omar’s testimony, then you could very easily become aware of holding (1a) on this basis, and so would very easily come to believe (2a’) on the basis of that awareness. Thus, even though you have a conclusive reason for believing (1a), you do not have a conclusive reason for believing (2a’) even though (by hypothesis) you know it. Seeing as there is no reason why the result from the New Shoes Case will not generalise, it seems
that you’ll never be able to know (2′) on the basis of R₂, which is in direct violation of A₂′.

There are two problems with the modified version of the reflectivity objection. The success of RO′ depends on whether the assumptions made by RO′ are just as plausible as the assumptions made by RO, and whether those assumptions have the same consequences. I find A₁′ just as plausible as A₁. I will however, argue that A₁′ does not yield the conclusion that S can never have conclusive reasons for (2′). More importantly, I will argue that, despite the fact that A₂ is quite plausible, A₂′ is very problematic because it begs the question against the sensitivity theorist.

From the fact that it is impossible to have conclusive reasons for (2′) on the basis of R₂, it simply doesn’t follow that RO′-CRC is unsatisfiable given A₁′. It is possible to have a conclusive reason for (2′), but only if one has further reasons for believing it. The argument assumes that the reasons S has for believing (2′) must be the same as his reasons for believing (1) (plus introspection). While it is true that if S believes (1) it would be irrational of him to deny (2′) even if he has no further reasons for believing (2′), S is by no means precluded from finding further evidence in support of (2′), and thereby promoting that belief into knowledge. If S does gain reasons for (2′) that he did not originally have for (1), then provided these reasons for (2′) are conclusive reasons, he will know (2′). You may believe (2a′) simply on the basis of your reasons for believing (1a) (plus your awareness of having these reasons), but you could try to find other evidence in support of that belief. If, for instance, you discovered Omar’s receipt for the new pair of shoes, this would give you independent evidence for believing that you don’t falsely believe that Omar has new shoes on the basis of his testimony. If you were to believe (1a) falsely on the basis of Omar’s testimony, you would not have discovered this receipt. Rₙ need not equal R₂. Consequently, on the sensitivity account, S can come to know many instances of (2′) provided that he acquires more reasons for believing (2′) which he did not already have when he came to believe (1). The version of sensitivity that uses CRC rather than SSC does not have the ugly consequence that you can’t know (2′) irrespective of how good your evidence or epistemic position happens to be.

There are two things that Vogel could say in response. Firstly, he could (rightly) claim that my rebuttal violates A₂′. Since knowing (2′) is supposed to be no more
epistemically demanding than knowing (1), S shouldn’t have to find reasons for (2′) that go beyond what is necessary for knowing (1). I grant that the sensitivity theory violates assumption-2′, so if assumption-2′ is secure, then RO’ is still a good objection. My rebuttal so far is intended to show that unlike SSC, CRC does not have the ugly consequence that a certain class of seemingly innocent propositions is always entirely unknowable, irrespective of one’s evidence. As such, even if one finds A2’ plausible, RO’ does not make as much trouble for CRC as RO made for SSC.

Secondly, Vogel could point to cases where it would be implausible or even impossible to find evidence that would count as conclusive for (2′), despite the fact that S knows (1). Suppose that your evidence for believing (1a) is not merely Omar’s testimony, but that you in fact accompany Omar to the store, watch him try on the shoes, pay for them at the cash registrar, leave the store wearing the shoes he just bought and a lot more besides. In this case the relevant equivalent of (2′) is:

(2b′) I don’t falsely believe (1a) on the basis of all these countless bits of evidence.

What would it take to know (2b′)? If you did falsely believe (1a) on the basis of all this evidence, then you would be in a very strange kind of situation. There would either be a great big hoax, or some kind of persistent sensory deception. And it seems to me that no evidence that you might find in the actual world would be good enough to rule out the possibility that you are in such a strange situation. Consequently, not all instances of (2′) will be such that you’d be capable of finding evidence good enough to know (2′) even though you know (1).

These criticisms however, are not substantial. In fact they reveal the second and more serious weakness of RO’. Just because A2 is plausible it doesn’t follow that A2’ is plausible. In other words, while it may be the case that coming to know (2) is no more epistemically demanding than coming to know (1), it doesn’t automatically follow that coming to know (2′) is no more epistemically demanding than coming to know (1). There are good reasons for rejecting A2’. Consider the kind of world described above. Although it does not make explicit mention of an evil deceiver or brain in a vat technology, the presence of a hoax or widespread sensory deception means that it is in fact a sceptical
world. So to know (2b′) requires knowing that a sceptical hypothesis does not hold. But sensitivity theorists have always denied that we can know that sceptical hypotheses are false and, in this respect, intuition is on their side. 23 Therefore, to treat (2b′) as a counterexample, simply begs the question against the sensitivity account. Yet the anti-sceptical elements of (2b′) are shared by all instances of (2′). In particular, if you believe ¬(Bp via R1 & ¬p), then what you believe is that your evidence R1 for p is not misleading, and intuitively, if R1 is the only evidence you have for believing that R1 is not a misleading set of evidence for p, then you don’t know that it isn’t. Now according to A2′, you’re supposed to be able to know ¬(Bp via R1 & ¬p) on the basis of R2. However, seeing as R2 = R1 + introspective awareness of believing p on the basis of R1, R2 cannot give you anymore knowledge of the external world than R1 already does. What distinguishes (2b′) from an instance of (2′), such as (2a′), is that, intuitively, (2b′) is not knowable, whereas (2a′) is simply not known, but all instances of (2′) imply that your evidence is not deceptive or misleading. Therefore to treat any instance of (2′) as a counterexample and, more generally, to take A2′ as a starting assumption, begs the question against the sensitivity account.

Vogel himself appears to admit that there is no obvious way to know that our evidence is not misleading in a discussion, which he dubs ‘the problem of misleading evidence’ (2005: 79-80; 2007: 84-85). Suppose that E is your evidence for believing some ordinary proposition H. The problem of misleading evidence is this: how does one know that ¬(E&¬H) when E is all one has to go on? Vogel writes: “it is hard to see how E could be evidence that E itself is not misleading with respect to H” (2005: 80). Vogel is committed to saying that we can know ¬(E&¬H) on the basis of E alone because he believes we have knowledge of the external world and because of his commitment to closure; H entails ¬(E&¬H). However, given that sensitivity theorists explicitly reject closure, and given that when we consider the problem of misleading evidence independently of our (potential) commitment to closure our intuition is that we don’t know that our evidence is not misleading, why would Vogel consider (2′) to be a

23 Even if one rejects the claim that we don’t know that we’re not in a sceptical scenario, it would be philosophically uncooperative to deny that this claim has strong intuitive appeal. The field of Epistemology as we know it exists pretty much because we feel that there is something compelling about the sceptic’s argument.
counterexample to sensitivity? Surely this objection was meant to do more than show that sensitivity accounts violate the closure principle. We’ve known that from the inception of sensitivity accounts!

Perhaps Vogel simply failed to notice that this objection presupposes that we know the denials of sceptical hypotheses. My hunch is that he was primarily concerned with refuting the version of sensitivity which uses SSC. Since (2) is not the denial of a sceptical hypothesis, and since the structure of the objection against SSC is isomorphic to the structure of the objection against CRC, it is likely that he simply assumed that (2′) is just as intuitively knowable as (2) whenever (1) is known. Indeed, Vogel (2000, 2007) confines his discussion on how the reflectivity objection affects CRC to a footnote, which suggests that he did not consider the modification to make a great deal of difference.24 But of course the difference is significant. SSC cannot escape the objection in the way that CRC can. The closest not-(2) world is not a sceptical scenario. We established this when we showed that S can satisfy CRC with respect to ~(Bp&~p) simply on the basis of his reasons for p. Moreover, as we’ve already seen, if someone were to ask “how do you know that your belief that p is not false?” it would be perfectly reasonable of you to reply “because I have such and such a reason in support of p.” However if someone were to ask “how do you know that p is not false despite all your reasons for p (given that your reasons are compatible with not-p)?” you will have no recourse to such a reply. The question itself smacks of scepticism. I submit, therefore, that RO and RO’, despite their apparent similarity, differ just enough that RO is effective against SSC, but that RO’ is ineffective against CRC. Not only is A2′ far less intuitive than A2, but it is also an assumption that, under scrutiny, the sensitivity theory has always explicitly rejected.

1.6.2 Inductive knowledge objection. There is a series of counterexamples, initiated by Vogel (1987), which aim to show that the sensitivity theory is incompatible with inductive knowledge. The core idea is that you have certain evidence on the basis of which you make a prediction, or a generalisation. For instance, past experiences have led you to expect that ice melts after a certain time when left in the sun. So if you leave some

24 I still find it extremely puzzling how Vogel could have missed the anti-sceptical presupposition of RO’. In his (1987) ‘Tracking, Closure, and Inductive Knowledge’ where the present objection finds its roots, Vogel offers a response on behalf of Nozick which is similar in spirit to the response offered here.
ice out in the sun for two hours it seems that you ought to know that the ice has melted even if you cannot see that it has. But now consider: if the ice hadn’t melted, would your evidence have been any different? Vogel contends that it would not. So intuitively it seems like you know that the ice has melted, but you’re not sensitive to this fact. Here are a couple of other examples which are meant to establish the same thing.

**Hole-In-One Case.** “Sixty golfers are entered in the Wealth and Privilege Invitational Tournament. The course has a short but difficult hole, known as the ‘‘Heartbreaker’’. Before the round begins, you think to yourself that, surely, not all sixty players will get a hole-in-one on the ‘‘Heartbreaker’’.” (Vogel 1999: 165).

**X-ray Case.** “Roger places a piece of uranium on a photographic plate, and discovers that the plate has become fogged. He repeats the experiment many times. After numerous trials, he puts a piece of uranium on a plate, goes away from his laboratory, and returns some time later. Roger believes that the plate is fogged. Moreover he knows, by induction, that the plate is fogged, even before he inspects it” (Vogel 2007: 78).25

Vogel wants us to agree that in each of these cases we do know the relevant proposition, despite the fact that there is a tiny probability that the event in question will not, or has not, occurred. But our evidence in each of these cases is compatible with the low probability event occurring, and so, if the low probability event were to occur (i.e. all sixty golfers scoring a hole-in-one) then we would still have the same evidence for thinking that it won’t (or hasn’t). CRC isn’t satisfied and so it can’t be a necessary condition for knowledge.

The first question that needs asking is whether we do after all know that such rare events haven’t or won’t occur. In fact there is a stark similarity between the cases Vogel describes where we apparently do have knowledge and our apparent lack of knowledge of lottery propositions. There is a general consensus amongst philosophers that no matter

25 Another prominent counterexample of this sort is Sosa’s (1999) rubbish chute case.
what the odds of a lottery, one does not know (prior to the lottery being drawn) that one’s lottery ticket will lose, despite having overwhelming evidence that it will. Why then is it right to say that I don’t know that my lottery ticket will lose, but wrong to say that you don’t really know that not all sixty golfers will get a hole-in-one on the heartbreaker? Now according to the sensitivity theory, I don’t know that my lottery ticket will lose, for if my lottery ticket were the winning ticket, I would still think that it was the losing ticket (because my evidence wouldn’t have changed), and as Vogel himself notes (2007: 82) the reason why the sensitivity theory gets the right result in the lottery case is exactly the reason why it gets the (apparently) wrong results in his inductive knowledge cases. However, Vogel does not seriously consider the possibility that we lack knowledge in these cases, or rather he thinks that to admit that we lack knowledge in these cases is to allow a kind of scepticism (Vogel 2000). After all, there are a great many propositions that we take ourselves to know that would not count as knowledge in this case: that the blood of every person in San Francisco will not freeze in the next minute; that a plane about to crash into a mountain will not quantum tunnel and come out unscathed, and so on. I don’t agree with Vogel that this is a bad kind of scepticism, but whatever the case may be about that, it still seems awfully uncharitable to charge sensitivity with giving the wrong result on cases of inductive knowledge when there are no obvious differences – certainly none that Vogel himself cites – between these cases and lottery propositions. Indeed, when we consider some of Vogel’s cases in a certain light, they start to appear like standard lottery cases. If, for instance, I imagine the heart-breaker hole being played everyday for the next six billion years, then I certainly do not judge that on each of these days, not all sixty players will score a hole-in-one. But now, how am I to distinguish between one of those days on which all sixty players score a hole-in-one and today? Perhaps here we do lack knowledge after all.

I think that we can live with this degree of scepticism. First of all, I do not see any great deal of compromise in having to say that it is very, very likely that the plane will not quantum tunnel through the mountain rather than that we know it; or that the plate is very likely to be fogged rather than that I know it is fogged. Scepticism – real scepticism – wouldn’t grant us even that. But on the sensitivity theory we do know such things. If it weren’t very, very likely that the plane will not quantum tunnel through the mountain, the
world would be very different than the way it actually is, a difference that we would no
doubt be aware of.26 These results are in stark contrast to global sceptical scenarios
against which we have absolutely no evidence. In any case, the real worry is not that we
don’t know the falsity of sceptical scenarios, but that we might lack knowledge of
commonsense facts. The question then, is whether failing to know that quantum
tunnelling has not taken place, whether merely knowing that it very, very likely has not,
is somehow an attack on commonsense knowledge. There is at least one obvious sense in
which it is not; we do not typically claim to know such things as that a quantum
tunnelling event won’t occur. We do, of course, claim to know many things which entail
the falsity of such events. I may, for instance, claim to know that my keys are on the
kitchen table, even though I don’t know, and couldn’t claim to know, that they haven’t
quantum tunnelled to China. However, this is no problem for sensitivity; my keys
tunnelling to China is not one of the closest possible worlds where my keys are not on the
kitchen table. So this form of scepticism, if it can be called that, does not infect our
commonsense knowledge (if we deny closure).27 Moreover, I think that to admit this tiny
degree of scepticism is actually itself a form of anti-scepticism: quantum physicists have
shown (to a very high degree of confidence) that we lack absolute certainty about the
location of particles. If this is scepticism at all, it is a scepticism that has been established
by empirical means.

26 There are complications here for the sensitivity theory, which I unfortunately I do not have the space to
explore. First of all it is questionable whether the sensitivity theory will work for knowledge claims of
subjective probabilities. Normally sentences of the form “I know that \( p \) is probably true” are not meant to
express knowledge of one’s own subject states, but it isn’t apparent how we’re to evaluate a world where it
is false that \( p \) is probably true, where the probability is subjective, other than by reference to our mental
states. Secondly, one way in which “\( p \) is 99% probable” is false is if “\( p \) is 98% probable”, but in order for
the sensitivity theory to work, the probability would have to vary a lot more drastically than that. So even
for sentences with objective probabilities, there would have to be some modification of the sensitivity
apparatus to deal with knowledge claims of probabilities.

27 I think that sensitivity does give the wrong result on the following pair of propositions: ‘I won’t be able
to afford an African safari this year’ and ‘I won’t win the lottery’. A theory that denies closure ought to say
that you can know the first while failing to know the second. The problem for sensitivity is that a world in
which you do win the lottery is not necessarily very distant; it may in fact be one of the closest worlds
where you can afford an African Safari. Or compare the following two cases: a middle-class man who did
not get the promotion he was hoping for, and a homeless man, both of whom are in possession of a lottery
ticket; each of them asserts that they can’t afford an African safari this year. It seems to me that the
homeless man ought to be more confident that he can’t afford an African Safari, and yet it is clearer in his
case that his belief is not sensitive, as compared to the middle-class man. This case reveals much the same
problem that I present for sensitivity later on.
There are yet other ways out of the problem. At one point Vogel considers the possibility that for such cases of inductive knowledge, whether or not the sensitivity condition is satisfied is indeterminate (2007: fn.10). The thought here is that there are many diverse ways in which, for instance, the plate might not have become fogged in the X-ray Case, and in some of these Roger’s evidence would be different, but there is no clear way to decide which worlds are closest. Vogel (2007: fn. 10) claims that “this suggestion only strengthens the point against [sensitivity]. If it is determinately true that Roger knows that the plate is fogged, then it must be determinately true that he satisfies the conditions for knowledge.” Presumably Vogel thinks that it is determinately true that Roger does know. I find this curious. If Vogel admits that we lack knowledge of lottery propositions, and also admits that the features which make lottery propositions different from his cases of inductive knowledge are “extremely elusive and recalcitrant” (2007: 82), then how can he be so sure that it is determinately true that we have knowledge in these inductive cases? Indeed, as we’ve seen, our intuitions about these cases are hostage to the way in which the case is presented, which seems to strengthen the idea that our intuitions with respect to these cases are also indeterminate.

The last point I wish to make as a way of blunting Vogel’s objection is this. If he wishes to claim that we know propositions like ‘the ice has melted’ despite the fact that (for all our evidence shows) this is possibly false, then he is committed to embracing the following seemingly ‘abominable possibility’ claim:

(AP)  I know that the ice has melted, but it is possible that it has not melted.

(I shall refer to any sentence of the form ‘S knows that \(p\), but it is possible that not-\(p\)’ as AP).

There was, after all, a very small probability that the ice wouldn’t have melted in two hours (so say the laws of thermodynamics), which means that we should be in a position now to assert that it is possible that it hasn’t melted. At the same time, if we also know that the ice has melted, then we must be in a position to assert that as well. (If you’re worried that Vogel need not admit that it is possible now that the ice has melted, then suppose that when you leave the ice out in the sun, you form the belief that the ice will
melt in two hours. Vogel wants to say that this is also a case of knowledge, but in this case he is committed to another case of AP: I know that the ice will melt within two hours, but it is possible that it will not melt within two hours).

Now one of the major reasons why many philosophers have disliked sensitivity, and in particular, why they’ve disliked the denial of epistemic closure, is that to deny closure between knowledge of mundane and anti-sceptical propositions is to embrace what DeRose (1995) has dubbed the abominable conjunction:

\[(AC)\quad \text{I know that I have hands, but I don’t know that I am not a handless brain in a vat.}\]

It seems to me that AP sounds at least as bad as AC. If this is true however, then it hardly pays to keep closure and thereby avoid being committed to embracing AC if one has to embrace very similar problematic conjunctions like AP. Moreover, to treat these cases of apparent inductive knowledge as counterexamples to sensitivity, commits one to rejecting an epistemic principle which also sounds at least as plausible as the closure principle.

Consider the following possibility-based sceptical argument, which is similar in nature to the closure-based sceptical argument:

\[(1)\quad \text{It is possible (given the laws of thermodynamics) that the ice-cube has not melted.}\]
\[(2)\quad \text{If it is possible that the ice-cube has not melted, then I don’t know that the ice-cube has melted}\]
\[(C)\quad \text{I don’t know that the ice-cube has melted.}\]

Vogel is committed to rejecting (2), but structurally to reject (2) is analogous to rejecting the closure premise in the closure based sceptical argument. Let us call something like (2) the possibility principle:

\[(PP)\quad \text{If it is possible for } p \text{ to be false (either objectively or subjectively for S), then S does not know that } p.\]
It seems to me that our intuitions with respect to PP are at least as strong as our intuitions with respect to the closure principle. If that’s so, then one can hardly object to sensitivity on the basis of the problem of inductive knowledge if doing so commits one to something just as bad as the worst commitment of sensitivity.28 Perhaps Vogel can show that rejecting PP is not as bad as rejecting the closure principle, but this is something he needs to do before cases of (apparent) inductive knowledge can constitute an objection to sensitivity.

Moreover, a reasonable case can be made for showing that AP is not merely abominable, but also a contradiction, which would amount to showing that PP is not negotiable. This is in fact what DeRose (1991) argues. Central to his argument is Unger’s (1975) famous thesis that knowledge is the norm of assertion. According to Unger to say,

(A) The cat is on the mat, but I don’t know that it is

sounds wrong because the first conjunct, the assertion that the cat is on the mat, represents it as being the case that I do know that the cat is on the mat, which obviously contradicts with the second conjunct. Still, (A) is not a contradiction. A diagnostic sign of this is that ‘the cat is on the mat’ does not entail the falsity of ‘I don’t know that the cat is on the mat’. So the feeling of contradiction comes from what we sense is being represented as being the case, rather than from the actual semantic content of the sentence. On the other hand AP is a better contender for being a contradiction. That it is possible that the ice has not melted (asserted by me) seems like it entails that I don’t know that the ice has melted. DeRose considers the possibility that statements like AP derive their oddness from statements like

(B) the ice has melted, but it is possible that it hasn’t melted

28 Of course one could object to sensitivity in this way if one had no problems with the denial of closure, but Vogel (1990) has vehemently argued against the denial of closure. Moreover, as we shall see below, there are actually good reasons to think that AP is in fact a contradiction rather than, like AC, merely weird sounding. In other words, there are better reasons for keeping PP than closure.
If this were the case, then there would be no genuine contradiction in AP, seeing as, according to DeRose, (B) is not a genuine contradiction: that it is possible that not-\( p \) obviously does not entail that \( p \) is false. The problem with this analysis is that it leaves unexplained why (B) itself sounds abominable. So instead DeRose proposes that the clash in (B) derives from the (potential) fact that AP is a contradiction. Given the norm of assertion, to assert \( p \) is to represent oneself as knowing that \( p \), so to assert ‘\( p \), but it is possible that not-\( p \)’ is to represent it as being the case that you know \( p \), but that it is possible that not-\( p \), which is just what AP says. Thus, the hypothesis that AP is a contradiction explains why we sense a clash in asserting (B).

Yalcin (forthcoming) has argued that (B) is itself a contradiction. If that’s so, then we do not need AP to be false in order to explain the oddness of asserting (B), which undermines DeRose’s hypothesis. However, it turns out that Yalcin’s grounds for thinking that (B) is a contradiction are also grounds for thinking that AP itself is a contradiction. Yalcin notes that one common reason for thinking that Moorean sentences like (A) are merely pragmatically defective, rather than semantically defective, is that they are perfectly intelligible under certain kinds of embedding, such as:

\[
\begin{align*}
(A_1) & \text{ Suppose that the cat is on the matt, but I don’t know that it is.} \\
(A_2) & \text{ If the cat is on the matt, but I don’t know that it is, then…}
\end{align*}
\]

When asserting (\( A_1 \)) or (\( A_2 \)), there is no residual sense of oddness; these sentences are perfectly acceptable. However, if we imbed sentences with (B)’s structure, the results make no sense:

\[
\begin{align*}
(B_1) & \text{ Suppose the ice has melted, but it is possible that it hasn’t melted.} \\
(B_2) & \text{ If the ice has melted, but it’s possible that it hasn’t melted, then…}
\end{align*}
\]

So if imbedding under ‘suppose’ or under the antecedent of an indicative conditional is supposed to reveal that sentences like (A) are in fact perfectly sensible semantically speaking, then such a procedure should yield the same result for (B). It doesn’t however, so (B) must be bad in some way different from (A). However, as I suggested a moment
ago, even if this undermines DeRose’s diagnosis of the awfulness of asserting (B), which led us to conclude that AP is a contradiction, Yalcın’s own diagnosis actually leads to the same conclusion. Sentences like

\[(AP_1) \text{ Suppose that I know that the ice has melted, but it is possible that it has not melted.}\]
\[(AP_2) \text{ If I know that the ice has melted, but it is possible that it has not melted, then…}\]

sound just as bad as (B₁) and (B₂). So whether we go with DeRose’s diagnosis, or Yalcın’s, either way (AP) comes out as a contradiction. On these grounds we have good reason to think that PP is even more plausible than the closure principle. So if I’m right that in making his objection to sensitivity, Vogel is committed to the truth of sentences like AP, and it is in fact true that AP is a contradiction, then it must be the case that either we don’t know propositions that Vogel says we do know, or else we do know them, but the small probability of them being false is somehow an irrelevant possibility.

1.7 Methods versus reasons and the insufficiency of sensitivity. Ultimately however, I don’t think that any sensitivity condition which employs similarity based semantics for counterfactuals will work. Our intuitions about which possibilities need to be ruled out in order to be said to know are imperfectly captured by the closeness of worlds. In fact, this issue can be brought to the surface if we consider the difference between the way Nozick and Dretske formulate their sensitivity condition.

Earlier I said that if we employ SSC then our resulting theory will be prone to some very basic counter-examples, like the following. Larry visits his grandma and she sees that he is well. However, if Larry had been sick or dead then other family members would have told his grandmother that he is well. Thus, if SSC is taken as necessary, it seems that Larry’s grandmother doesn’t know that he is well (in the closest worlds where he isn’t well, she still believes that he is), but that does not square with our intuitions. The fact that she would’ve been deceived if he hadn’t been well doesn’t mean that she is being deceived in the actual world where she sees that he is well.
It is because of such a counterexample to SSC that Nozick thought it necessary to fix the formation of beliefs to particular methods, such that the method one uses to form the belief that $p$ in the counterfactual world, must be the method that one uses to form the belief that $p$ in the actual world. Call this the tracking condition (TC):

**TC:** If it weren’t the case that $p$ and S forms a belief about whether or not $p$, via M, then S wouldn’t believe that $p$ via M.

This more complicated counterfactual appears to gives us the right verdict about the grandmother case. A world in which her family deceives her about Larry’s health isn’t a world where she’d believe that he is well by looking at him. Earlier I also said that a version of sensitivity which employs CRC will get around such counterexamples, and indeed it does. The evidence that grandmother uses to arrive at the belief that Larry is well in the actual world is not available to her in the closest worlds where he is unwell, even though in those worlds she’d still believe he is well.

Are Dretske’s CRC and Nozick’s TC equivalent? One thing which suggests that they are is that Nozick wants to individuate methods at the level of experience: “any method experientially the same, the same “from the inside”, will count as the same method. Basing our beliefs on experiences, you and I and the person floating in a tank are using, for these purposes, the same method” (1981: 185). However, even if we consider “reasons for believing” and “method of arriving at a belief” to be equivalent, there is still one glaring difference between CRC and TC. The antecedent of TC is stronger than the antecedent of CRC, for it requires that we go out to the closest not-$p$ worlds where S actually forms a belief about whether or not $p$ via M. CRC merely requires us to go to the nearest not-$p$ worlds.

Which of the two conditions is better? Consider the following modified grandma case. Larry visits his grandma; she looks at him and comes to believe that he is well. He is indeed well, and if he weren’t well, her family would have kept her from seeing him and would instead tell her that he is well. Unfortunately grandma is a very bad judge of when someone is sick based on the way they look, and so, even if she had seen him sick, she would’ve thought that he is well (she’s an optimist). CRC is nonetheless met. Even
though her visual experience of Larry is not good enough to distinguish his being well from being unwell, the closest possible worlds in which he is not well are worlds where she doesn’t have that visual experience (because she wouldn’t have got to see him at all). TC on the other hand is not met, since the antecedent requires that we go out to the nearest worlds where Grandma uses the same method for coming to believe whether or not Larry is well. Moreover, it seems that the factor in virtue of which CRC gives us the right result in the original grandma case is not, intuitively, the factor which makes us think that grandma does in fact know that Larry is well. We think that grandma knows because we’re supposing that she can tell, by looking at him, whether or not he is well. But when we go to the closest worlds where Larry is not well (as CRC has us do), grandma doesn’t get to see Larry at all. These are the only worlds (according to CRC) that need to be ruled out. CRC says nothing about those more distant worlds where she sees him while he is unwell, but intuitively it is specifically those worlds which are relevant to our assessment. So even though CRC produces the right verdict (in the unmodified grandma case) it does so for seemingly the wrong reasons. It is also why CRC gives us the wrong verdict in the modified grandma case. Thus, it seems that by taking us out to worlds where the method of belief formation is kept the same as in the actual world, TC provides an improvement over CRC.

Unfortunately this verdict would be premature. If methods are supposed to be individuated by one’s experiences, how is one even supposed to arrive at a different belief about \( p \), when \( p \) is false, when the same method is being used? If the experience is to be kept the same in all the possible worlds we consider, then one will inevitably believe \( p \) in all the worlds we consider. Now to be fair, even though Nozick says that methods are to be individuated from the inside (1981: 185, 232-233), he does not say that any two methods which are the same will have the same experience. It might be that any two methods that produce the same experience count as the same method, without it being the case that any two methods which are the same produce the same experience. Unfortunately, Nozick does not provide a necessary condition for what makes two methods the same.

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29 I take Williamson’s (2000: 155) Tweedledum and Tweedledee example to be making the same point.
There is a reason to think that no matter how we individuate methods, we will not get a satisfying result. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that using the same method is equivalent to using the same sensory modality. So to form a belief on the basis of a visual experience is one kind of method. Now consider the following objection: Kripke’s modified fake-barns case. Henry is looking at a green barn and comes to believe that before him is a green barn. Unbeknownst to Henry, the area he is in is replete with fake barns although none of the fake barns are green; the real barns were painted green on purpose. In this situation, if we go with TC and individuate methods by sensory modality, then Henry knows that before him is a green barn. If it weren’t a green barn, then he wouldn’t have come to believe that before him is a green barn (for none of the fake barns are painted green). However, he doesn’t know that before him is a barn. If it weren’t a barn, it might have been a fake barn, and so he might have come to believe that it was a barn. In each of these scenarios Henry is using the same method to form his beliefs as he is in the actual world (visual experience), but this result is clearly absurd (even if one denies closure). How could Henry know that before him is a green barn, but not know that before him is a barn?

Dretske’s formulation of sensitivity fares better on this example. The experience on which Henry basis his belief that it’s a green barn and that it’s a barn, is the same experience. Thus, whether we go to the closest worlds where Henry is not looking at a green barn, or to the closest worlds where Henry is not looking at a barn, Henry wouldn’t have the greenish barn experience in either of those worlds. In the closest worlds where he is not looking at a barn, he might be looking at a fake barn, but it wouldn’t be green, so he wouldn’t be basing his belief that it’s a barn on the same experience. What allows Dretske to get out of this objection, but not Nozick, is that the individuation of reasons is more fine-grained than methods. Nozick cannot afford to individuate methods in the same way as reasons because he requires that we use the same method in the not-\(p\) worlds to arrive at a belief about \(p\), but to individuate methods in too fine-grained a way will cause S to believe \(p\) in every not-\(p\) world under consideration.

Suppose we don’t individuate methods as finely as reasons, but more finely than by sensory modalities. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to help, for we can vary Kripke’s

30 Unpublished, but widely talked about.
counterexample to yield an absurd result no matter how we individuate the methods (short of making them as finely individuated as reasons). Choose any level of specificity that you like, so long as the methods are course-grained enough to allow you to arrive at different verdicts of belief about any proposition. Then construct a Kripke-style example where the difference between the first proposition and the second picks out a quality that your individuation of methods is not supposed to register. By now you ought to have a counterexample.

One way out of this problem is to mix Nozick’s and Dretske’s condition, such that you have a relatively course-grained notion of methods in the antecedent of the counterfactual (perhaps something like using the same sensory modality), and the fine-grained notion of reasons in the consequent:

TC-CRC: If it weren’t the case that \( p \) and \( S \) forms a belief about whether or not \( p \), via \( M \), then \( S \) wouldn’t have had \( R \), where \( R \) is the reason \( S \) has for believing \( p \) in the actual world.

The effect of this is that \( S \) is now required to use the same method for arriving at a belief about \( p \), which is what we need to handle the modified grandma case, while allowing \( S \) to reject any possibility which does not match up with the evidence he actually has, which is what we need to handle the Kripke barns case; so far, so good. Unfortunately other, deeper problems plague the sensitivity condition. For one, there is a potential worry with building any notion of methods into the antecedent. There are going to be some values of \( p \), and some method \( M \) of coming to know whether or not \( p \), such that the closest world where \( p \) is false and \( S \) forms a belief about \( p \) via \( M \) will be a problematically distant world. Now I do not think there is a problem with distant worlds being taken as relevant in principle (as Pritchard does). However, if we again consider the reflectivity objection, we can show that, CRC, TC-CRC will not be satisfied for (2), which we conceded to be a problem for SSC. Recall the New Shoes Case. If you’re required to use the same method as in the actual world for arriving at the belief that (2a), then you would (or at least might) come to believe (2a) for exactly the same reasons as in the actual world. If Omar lied to you about having new shoes, then your reasons for believing that (b₂) will be
exactly the same as in the actual world. Normally, when you consider not-
worlds where you use the same method to arrive at a belief about whether or not \( p \), if the method is
reliable in the actual world, then it would not lead you to believe \( p \) in the closest not-
worlds. However, in this particular case we’re being asked to imagine that you do believe
\( p \) falsely, and so keeping the same method for arriving at a belief about whether or not
\( \neg (Bp \& \neg p) \) guarantees that you also use the same method for arriving at the belief that \( p \).
This is because your method for arriving at \( \neg (Bp \& p) \) in the actual world partially
includes your method for arriving at \( p \) (and then reflecting). So in this respect, at least,
CRC is superior to TC-CRC.

More importantly however, I think that there is an underlying problem with taking
the closest or nearby worlds as somehow being innately more epistemically relevant than
worlds that fall outside of that sphere. This is precisely the reason why CRC seems to
give the wrong verdict about the modified grandma case. Now by putting methods into
the antecedent we get out to more distant not-
worlds, which as we’ve discovered,
intuitively seem more relevant than simply the closest not-
worlds. However, this in
itself shows that our intuitions about relevancy do not adequately match up with the
closeness of possible worlds. Unfortunately, I’m not so sure that strengthening the
antecedent to keep the method constant will take care of all the problems. To see why, let
us modify the grandma case even further. Larry always visits his grandma on her
birthday, and this time is no different. Grandma sees Larry and comes to believe that he is
well. Larry is well, but if he weren’t, he would’ve worn a disguise that makes him look
well. However while this disguise makes him look well it also makes him look somewhat
different to the way he actually looks, and so, if he weren’t well, grandma’s evidence for
thinking that he is well wouldn’t be the same. But again, suppose that grandma can’t tell
on the basis of seeing someone whether or not they’re well (but still comes to believe on
that basis that they are well). TC-CRC is met, but intuitively grandma doesn’t know that
Larry is well. So even though putting methods into the antecedent gets the sensitivity
theory out of some counterexamples, as a general strategy for counterexamples of this
type it fails.

This problem for sensitivity is pervasive and reveals a fundamental flaw with
modal distance epistemology in general. Consider, for instance, the following objection
to the sufficiency of CRC due to Martin (1975: 216-217). S buys a ticket at his local race track. The conditions of the ticket are such that if Gumshoe wins in the first race, or Tagalong wins in the second, or both, S will receive 20 dollars. Let us suppose that Gumshoe does win in the first race, but Tagalong lost badly (in fact let us say he was drugged and stood little chance of winning). S does not receive any information about the race, but instead presents his ticket to the cashier and receives a 20 dollar payout. On this basis he forms the belief that Gumshoe won. According to CRC S knows that Gumshoe won because the closest worlds in which he didn’t win, S wouldn’t have received the payout. But intuitively S doesn’t know that Gumshoe won. The only thing he knows (intuitively) is that either Gumshoe or Tagalong won.

It seems to me that the reason why CRC gives the wrong verdict in Martin’s case, as well as the modified grandma case, is exactly the same sort of reason why safety gives the wrong verdict about modally robust propositions. In fact, Martin’s counterexample to the sufficiency of CRC works equally well against safety. In all the nearby worlds where S believes that Gumshoe won (on the basis of receiving the payout) Gumshoe does in fact win. Similarly for the modified grandma case; since grandma is never allowed to see Larry when he is unwell, all the world in which she comes to believe that he is well on the basis of her actual evidence will be worlds where she sees him, and so, will be worlds where he is indeed well, but intuitively, if she can’t discriminate him being well from being unwell on the basis of seeing him, then she doesn’t know that he is well. The difference between these two cases and the modally robust objection to safety is that in the former one’s reasons do rule out some of the worlds in which \( p \) is false, whereas in the latter, one’s reasons make absolutely no contribution to knowing \( p \). Still, in the former cases, one’s reasons do not make enough of a difference. There are some intuitively relevant worlds which are not ruled out by one’s reasons.

1.8 Modal distance conditions are not necessary for knowledge. The counterexamples above are meant to reveal the insufficiency of modal distance theories of knowledge, so someone may respond that if I have nothing to say against their necessity then they may still be on the right track. I have already given some reason to think why the insufficiency of safety casts doubt on the whole approach and I suspect that much the same reasons can
be put to work against sensitivity. In any case, there are also counterexamples to the necessity of both safety and sensitivity. Neta and Rohrbaugh (2004: 399-400) present such a case against safety.31 Call it the Drinking Water Case:

I am drinking a glass of water which I have just poured from the bottle. Standing next to me is a happy person who has just won the lottery. Had this person lost the lottery, she would have maliciously polluted my water with a tasteless, odorless, colorless toxin. But since she won the lottery, she does no such thing. Nonetheless, she almost lost the lottery. Now, I drink the pure, unadulterated water and judge, truly and knowingly, that I am drinking pure, unadulterated water. But the toxin would not have flavored the water, and so had the toxin gone in, I would still have believed falsely that I was drinking pure, unadulterated water. Despite the falsity of my belief in the nearby possibility, it seems that, in the actual case, I know that I am drinking pure, unadulterated water.

There is a nearby world where I have all the same reasons I actually have for believing that I am drinking unadulterated water, but where I am in fact drinking water polluted by a toxin, so the safety condition isn’t met. Moreover, it seems that one of the closest possible worlds in which I am not drinking unadulterated water is a world in which I am drinking the toxin water, even though I would still believe I’m drinking unadulterated water, so the sensitivity condition isn’t met. Why do Neta and Rohrbaugh claim that in this case I know that I am drinking water? In some ways this case just resembles the fake-barn case. However, as Neta and Rohrbaugh are at pains to point out (2004: 401), Henry is a bad judge of what is and isn’t a barn in his actual circumstances, while in the drinking water case I am a good judge of what is and isn’t water in the actual circumstances; I am only a bad judge of what is and isn’t water in counterfactual circumstances. If we take their intuition on board what we have here is a nearby sceptical possibility (the water I am drinking contains a tasteless, odorless, colorless toxin) which is still an irrelevant possibility. So whatever it is that makes sceptical possibilities irrelevant, it is not their modal distance.

31 A somewhat less clear counterexample is presented by Comesana (2005), which ultimately makes the same point. Both Neta and Rohrbaugh’s, and Comesana’s counterexamples are originally meant as an attack on safety, but they can be extended to sensitivity with sufficient plausibility.
1.9 Concluding remarks. To some up, the sensitivity theory has one advantage over its two rivals, namely that one’s reasons for believing $p$ are always conducive to the truth of $p$. However, this advantage is short lived, for there are cases where one’s reasons are insufficient for knowing $p$ even though they are sufficient for being sensitive to $p$, and they are sufficient for being sensitive for much the same reason as having no reasons at all is sufficient for being safe with respect to modally robust propositions. Conditions that appeal to modal distance are also apparently not necessary for knowledge, as the Drinking Water Case shows. Lastly, I also argued against contextualism generally. No matter what criterion of relevance the contextualist appeals to he runs into the problem of saying why the principle that rules that in contexts when neither A nor B are salient A is a relevant alternative while B is not, it does not similarly rule that B is an irrelevant alternative when it is salient. They have not motivated the case that salience makes any epistemic difference.
2.1 Strategies for rejecting the sceptical argument. This chapter deals with the closure principle for knowledge. As is well known, the closure principle plays a crucial role in a certain type of Sceptical Argument:

1. S doesn’t know that not-SH. (Sceptical premise).
2. If S doesn’t know that not-SH then S doesn’t know that M. (Closure principle).
3. S doesn’t know that M. (Sceptical conclusion).

Like the sensitivity theorists, I wish to block the sceptical conclusion by denying the closure principle. To achieve this aim I will identify and argue against a number of strategies (as opposed to specific theories) for avoiding scepticism without denying closure. In the second half of this chapter I will deal with one such recent strategy which aims to deny premise-2 of the sceptical argument without denying that some version of the closure principle is true. The thought is that the sceptical argument appeals to a very implausible version of the closure principle, but that any closure principle which is plausible will not yield the sceptical conclusion. My aim will be to show that there is a very plausible closure principle which theorists have tended to overlook and that it does yield the sceptical conclusion. In the two chapters that follow I will consider two ways of denying the first premise. Chapter 3 considers the Moorean strategy of inferring that SH is false from one’s purported knowledge of M. This strategy raises issues about what it takes for knowledge or warrant to be transmitted via entailment, and my discussion of that issue will aim to show that the Moorean strategy is not viable. Chapter 4 considers what I will call the idealist strategy (not to be confused with Idealism), according to

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Some recent literature (e.g. Pryor 2000; Pritchard 2005) raises the worry that the closure-based sceptical argument is not the most effective way of formulating Cartesian scepticism. If so, then there arises the worry that any theory that rejects closure is giving up a lot for very minimal gain. (Pritchard makes this claim). This conclusion is too hasty, for it has not been shown that a closure denying theory like sensitivity has no force against these supposedly more effective arguments. For example, an alternative sceptical argument relies on the principle of under-determination – that if your evidence does not favour \( p \) over \( q \) where \( q \) is incompatible with \( p \) – however the sensitivity theory has equal force against the principle of under-determination as it does against closure.
which we know SH to be false simply because this possibility is *irrelevant* to our knowledge. I will argue against this strategy on the grounds that what I take to be the most plausible principle of relevance, which I draw from Wright’s notion of entitlement, in its most canonical interpretation actually leads to the denial of closure.

In the first half of this chapter however, I wish to examine some of the major reasons why many philosophers consider the closure principle to be non-negotiable. My aim is to identify the most fundamental closure supporting intuition, and thereby formulate the most plausible closure principle. In Chapter 4 I will argue that this principle is nonetheless false.

### 2.2 Closure supporting intuitions

Let us start by considering the following dialectic in Klein (2004: 165):

If closure holds, every circumspect knower of the fact that the table is red would also know that it is not a white table being illuminated by a red light. In such a case, it appears that our knowledge has been amplified too much for it seems that we can come to know that the table is red by looking at it, but how could we come to know that it is not white being illuminated by a red light by looking at the table?

Nevertheless, closure seems intuitively plausible. If I know that all men are mortal and Socrates is a man, then it seems that I know, or at least am in a position to know, that Socrates is mortal because I know, or at least am in a position to know, the logical consequences of what I know. Every student of Euclidean Geometry implicitly employs closure when she claims she knows a high numbered theorem because she derived it from some lower numbered theorems. In general, it seems that we can always expand our knowledge by deduction. What to do?

Klein would have us believe that there is a conflict of intuitions here, but I fail to see it. Despite his claim that “it seems that we can always expand our knowledge by deduction,” the examples he offers in the second paragraph do not lend support to epistemic closure *in full generality*. If the sensitivity theorist has a principled reason for counting only the first case as a failure of closure, but not the other two, then there is no conflict here. The closure supporting sentiment of the second paragraph seems to be that knowledge can be *expanded* or *transmitted* by deduction. This however, is not a good reason in support of
closure for the simple fact that there may well be some cases of coming to know \( P \) that require an antecedent (or contemporaneous) knowledge of one (or more) of \( P \)’s consequences. If such there be, then we will have cases that do not violate closure, but where there is no transmission of knowledge via entailment. Perhaps Klein’s Red Table Case is one of those. Perhaps we have to know that the table is not white and being cleverly illuminated by red light before we can know that it is red. But whether or not that’s so, it seems prima facia plausible that you cannot come to know the former by deducing it from the latter. So even if closure holds in full generality, it is very contentious that transmission of knowledge holds in full generality, in which case it makes no sense to claim that closure holds in full generality on the grounds that closure is necessary for transmission of knowledge. Now what the sensitivity theorist wants to say is that there is a certain class of cases – the Red Table Case being one of those – where (a) you seem to know that \( p \), (b) \( p \) entails \( q \) (and you may also know this), (c) intuitively knowledge of \( p \) does not transmit to \( q \), but (d) it is also implausible to suppose that you know \( q \) by other (prior) means. Let us, with Dretske (2005), call such cases of apparent transmission failure heavyweight implications (as opposed to lightweight implications). For Dretske, \( q \) is a heavyweight implication of \( p \) when the reasons in virtue of which one believes that \( p \) do not count as reasons for believing \( q \). The appearance of a red table counts as a reason for thinking that the table is red, but it does not count as a reason for thinking that it is not a white table cleverly illuminated by red light (even though the former entails the latter). If the table weren’t red, it wouldn’t have appeared red, but if the table were white while being cleverly illuminated by a red light, then it would still appear red. We can use the machinery of the sensitivity theory to formalise the distinction between heavyweight and lightweight implications: \( q \) is a lightweight implication of \( P \) iff \( \sim q \implies \sim R \), where \( R \) is the reason \( S \) has for believing \( p \) in the actual world; otherwise it is

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33 Hawthorne (2005) mistakenly refers to Dretske’s notion of ‘a heavyweight implication’ as ‘a heavyweight proposition’. For Hawthorne (2005: 33) \( P \) is a heavyweight proposition “just in case we all have some strong inclination to say that \( P \) is not the sort of thing that one can know by the exercise of reason alone and also that \( P \) is not the sort of thing that one can know by use of one’s perceptual faculties.” This doesn’t capture what Dretske needs. For Dretske, one and the same proposition might at one point be a heavyweight implication and at another point a lightweight implication. If you believe that the animal is a zebra because it is a black and white striped equine and because you’ve checked to see that it is free of disguise, then for you, its being a disguised mule is no longer a heavyweight implication of its being a zebra. Unfortunately a number of philosophers (e.g. Luper 2005 encyclopaedia entry on closure; Kvanvig 2006; Zalabardo forthcoming) have followed Hawthorne’s interpretation of Dretske’s distinction.
a heavyweight implication.\textsuperscript{34} This says that if $q$ is a heavyweight implication of $p$, then the reasons one has for believing that $p$ cannot rule out the closest not-$q$ worlds: if $q$ were false, it might still be that $R$. The sensitivity theorist can now express a restricted closure principle:

\begin{align*}
\text{RCK: If } S \text{ knows that } p, p \text{ entails } q, \neg q \rightarrow \neg R \text{ (where } R \text{ is the reason } S \text{ has for believing } p \text{ in the actual world), then } S \text{ knows that } q. \textsuperscript{35}
\end{align*}

Are there any reasons to prefer unrestricted closure\textsuperscript{36} over RCK? Let’s go back to Klein’s examples. We’ve just seen that the Red Table Case involves a heavyweight implication. If the table were white but illuminated by a red light, then the table would still look red. So we cannot come to know that the table is not white but illuminated by a red light by deducing it from our knowledge that the table is red. The Socrates example is not of this kind. If Socrates weren’t mortal, then either not all humans would’ve been mortal, or Socrates wouldn’t be human. In either of those two cases, the closest worlds are presumably those in which we wouldn’t have had the reasons we actually have for thinking that all humans are mortal or for thinking that Socrates was human. Therefore this case doesn’t involve a heavyweight implication. The sensitivity theorist’s criterion for when closure does and does not fail lines up perfectly with the intuitions that Klein’s examples were meant to provoke, and which he believes to be in conflict. I simply do not see how the Socrates case and the Euclidean case are meant to motivate closure in full generality.

The lesson here is that one should not attempt to defend unrestricted closure by claiming that closure is what underlies the expansion of knowledge by deduction. What underlies the expansion of knowledge is a transmission principle and we need a transmission principle regardless of whether closure holds. In fact, closure defenders

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\textsuperscript{34} This is a ‘conclusive reasons’ variation of Nozick’s (1981: 231) restriction on closure: S knows that $q$ by deducing it from known fact $p$, provided that if $q$ were false, S wouldn’t believe that $p$.

\textsuperscript{35} This restricted closure principle will be prone to many (of what I consider to be) harmless objections that standard closure principles are also prone to. See the discussion below.

\textsuperscript{36} By ‘unrestricted closure’ I do not mean unrestricted in the sense that whenever one knows that $p$ one also knows that $q$. As we shall see, many proponents of closure do want to restrict closure to consequences that are known or competently deduced. By ‘unrestricted closure’ I mean that there aren’t particular proposition pairs that stand in an entailment relation whereby you can know one without knowing the other.
disagree amongst each other on whether the Red Table Case, for instance, is a case of transmission failure. We shall come back to this in Chapter 3. For now we still need to provide a motivation for closure that the denier of closure cannot straightforwardly explain away.

One reason for holding onto closure is the following. We tend to think that believing something which you have no good reason to believe is irrational, or at the very least, epistemically irresponsible. To believe something without reason is to breach a norm of rationality. If you lack reason to believe one way or the other, you should simply withhold judgement. We also tend to think that if you believe \( p \) and \( p \) entails \( q \), then you ought to believe \( q \) (or else, if you recognise the entailment, you ought to give up believing \( p \)). Now if closure doesn’t hold these two norms of rationality can come into direct conflict. (I am assuming that knowing \( p \) entails that you’re not at all irrational in believing \( p \)). Given that you know \( M \) (and therefore believe it) and \( M \) entails not-SH, it follows that you ought to believe not-SH or else you ought not to believe \( M \). Now since you know \( M \), it cannot be epistemically wrong for you to believe it, so it must be that you ought to believe not-SH. However, you don’t know that not-SH (so say closure deniers), so it also follows that you ought not to believe not-SH. This sounds like something akin to contradiction.\(^{37}\)

This objection can be met. The objection assumes that the only way to rationally believe a proposition is to know it, or at the very least believe it with justification (I deny closure for justification as well as knowledge, so the objection remains even with the proviso). I am thinking of justification as being some kind of evidential state which makes it sufficiently likely that the proposition in question is true. My claim is that you if you lack any evidential justification for a proposition, it might still be rational for you to believe it provided that to do otherwise – to believe it is false or to withhold judgement – would itself be somehow irrational (for some yet to be defined reason). These are cases of what Wright (2004) calls ‘unearned rational entitlements’, and argues that anti-sceptical

\(^{37}\) Although I have not seen anyone cast this objection before, some remarks by Feldman (1995: 493) capture it in spirit. He says, “If the epistemic situation were...[such that epistemic closure is false]...then I could reasonably think: (A) is true and (A) implies (B), but (B) is not true. To say, ‘Yes, I accept that (A) is true and that (A) implies (B), but I draw the line at (B); I do not commit myself to that’, is to be patently unreasonable.” Feldman does not say however, why the rejection of closure would make it reasonable to think this way. What he needs is the further claim that it cannot be rational to accept (B) without knowing (B). Once we have that on the table however, we can object to it, as I do below.
beliefs fall within this category. If this is right, then it would be rational of you to believe not-SH, but not in virtue of it being sufficiently likely that not-SH is true.

Now Wright does not deny closure. He thinks that warrant is a disjunctive property, comprising of unearned entitlements and evidential justification. Evidential justification is not closed under entailment, but if warrant disjunctively covers both evidential justification and entitlements, then warrant is closed (Wright 2004: 12). Unfortunately, Wright provides no reason for thinking that warrant ought to cover both properties. It thus seems entirely open for one to claim that only an evidentially justified belief ought to count as potentially ‘warranted’ or as ‘knowledge’. So an opponent of closure can use the notion of entitlement to avoid the objection mentioned above by claiming that if a belief is warranted, then all of its logical consequences for which you lack evidential justification must be the sorts of propositions that you are entitled to believe without evidence. Thus it is always rational to believe the logical consequences of what you know, even though you may fail to know them.

Perhaps then whether or not closure holds is a non-substantive, terminological issue. Wright understands ‘warranted belief’ to mean a belief it is rational to hold; I understand ‘warranted belief’ to mean a belief whose truth is guaranteed by one’s reasons. However, insofar as we’re understanding warrant to mean something intimately connected with knowledge, and insofar as the closure principle at issue is closure for knowledge, then I think that there are substantive considerations in favour of my interpretation of warrant. I’ll come back to this in Chapter 4. At this stage however we have not yet considered all the possible reasons for why one might want to keep closure.

Certainly, there is a pre-theoretic intuition in favour of closure. This much is obvious given that, as DeRose (1995: 28) points out, when a violation of closure is brought out into the open it sounds odd, or downright abominable: “I don’t know that I’m not a handless BIV, but I know that I have hands.” What might be the principle which underlies the tendency of such sentences to sound abominable? My claim is that we feel that our epistemic merit towards any proposition can be no better than our epistemic merit towards any logically weaker proposition. If our reasons are enough to ‘guarantee’
that \( p \) is true, then they can’t fail to guarantee the truth of anything entailed by \( p \). Let us call this the Relative Epistemic Position (REP) intuition. While I believe that this principle does not live up to scrutiny (though I shall not argue for this until chapter 4), I certainly think that we have a very strong inclination to believe it, and that it is the underlying reason why so many philosophers abhor the idea of giving up closure.

2.3 Supposedly necessary refinements to the closure principle. Unfortunately many pro-closure philosophers have lost sight of this simple closure supporting intuition. The literature is currently sprinkled with all sorts of ghastly and unnecessarily complicated closure principles that are barely related to REP. There are legitimate reasons for this unfortunate turn of events. Let \( Kx \) denote S knows that \( x \). The following, very simple closure principle appears to be prone to very simple counterexamples:

\[
CK1: \quad Kp \text{ and } (p \text{ entails } q) \rightarrow Kq.
\]

CK is obviously false because S may fail to appreciate the fact that \( p \) entails \( q \), and thus fail to know that \( q \) simply because he fails to appreciate this. It seems absurd to suggest that you can’t know \( p \) without knowing all of \( p \)’s logical consequences. For a while it was thought that knowledge is closed under \textit{known} entailment as per:

\[
CK2: \quad Kp \text{ and } K(p \text{ entails } q) \rightarrow Kq.
\]

Note that even CK2, a relatively lean closure principle, already departs from the REP intuition. If our reasons for \( p \) are enough to guarantee that \( p \), then they are enough to guarantee that \( q \), whether or not we know that \( p \) entails \( q \). Moreover, insisting on the ‘knowing the entailment’ restriction seems to imply that closure is what underlies our expansion of knowledge: if I know that \( p \) and then come to know that \( p \) entails \( q \), I

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38 The ‘guarantee’ here is not meant as ‘entail’. ‘Guarantee’ is roughly equivalent to ‘warrant’, but not in the way that ‘warrant’ is normally defined. One’s reasons could guarantee that \( p \) is true, without one being warranted in believing that \( p \). A detective may have before him evidence which ‘guarantees’ that Jones murdered Smith, but not yet be warranted in believing that Jones murdered Smith because he hasn’t ‘pieced it all together’, and hasn’t \textit{realised} that the evidence guarantees that Jones murdered Smith. More on this in section 2.5.

39 DeRose (1995) hits on pretty much the same kind of principle.
thereby also come to know that \( q \). We have just established however that closure ought not to be the principle that underlies the expansion of knowledge. This in itself is a reason to be suspect of CK2.

In any case, it soon became apparent that there are counterexamples to CK2. S might know that \( p \), and know that \( p \) entails \( q \), but fail to put the two together, and so fail to know that \( q \). The situation quickly escalated. Other restrictions were added, and other counterexamples were found. This all culminated in the result that with enough restrictions built into the antecedent, the principle that emerges is no longer anything that the sceptic can appeal to in support of his conclusion. Thus David and Warfield (forthcoming) and Blome-Tillmann (2006) have concluded that no one has anything to fear from closure based scepticism, even on the assumption that we don’t know not-SH.

I will go through these various objections and refinements rather briskly, for they are not our main concern. To handle the objection to CK2 that was just mentioned, we should modify CK2 as follows (where \( Bx \) denotes S believes that \( x \)):

\[
\text{CK3: } Kp \text{ and } K(p \text{ entails } q) \text{ and } Bq \rightarrow Kq.
\]

The resulting principle will be prone to the following objection. Suppose that S knows that \( p \), knows that \( p \) entails \( q \), and believes that \( q \), yet believes it not on the basis of the entailment, but because of some other deficient reason. In this case it would be wrong to say that S knows that \( q \). The following closure principle seems to get around that problem:

\[
\text{CK4: } Kp \text{ and } K(p \text{ entails } q) \text{ and } Bq \text{ on the basis of deduction from } p \rightarrow Kq.
\]

Even this is not good enough for some critics (e.g. David and Warfield). Suppose that even though S believes \( q \) on the basis of his knowledge that \( p \) and entailment from \( p \) to \( q \), he also believes \( q \) on the basis of deficient reasons, and believes it most firmly for these reasons. David and Warfield go through all these objections, amongst others, and tentatively settle on the following monstrous principle:
CK5: \((Kp \text{ and } K(p \text{ entails } q) \text{ and } Bq \text{ solely on the basis of deduction from } p \text{ and } (p \text{ entails } q)) \rightarrow Kq\).^{40}

2.4 Ghastly closure principles and the conditional sceptical conclusion. David and Warfield believe that there are challenges even to this “extremely plausible looking principle”, but we shall not bother with those. CK5 is enough, according to them, to show what is wrong with the Sceptical Argument. They believe that CK5 is of no use to the sceptic, because it does not establish what the sceptic needs, namely that no one ever knows any mundane proposition about the external world. In one good sense, even the relatively slim principle CK2 does not give the sceptic what he needs; if the second premise of the Sceptical Argument were replaced with CK2, the sceptical conclusion wouldn’t follow. For the sceptic to reach the conclusion he needs using CK2, he must add the premise that S knows that M entails not-SH, but not all agents know this, so there could be agents who know M, provided they don’t know that M entails not-SH. We get an even more drastic disparity between what the sceptic needs and what he gets, when using CK5:

1. \((Kp \text{ and } K(p \text{ entails } q) \text{ and } Bq \text{ solely based on deduction from } p \text{ and } (p \text{ entails } q)) \rightarrow Kq\).
2. S doesn’t know that not-SH
3. Either S doesn’t know that M, or S doesn’t know that M entails not-SH, or S doesn’t believe not-SH solely on the basis of deducing it from M.
4. S knows that M entails not-SH
5. S believes not-SH solely on the basis of deducing it from M.
C. S doesn’t know that M.

---

40 Since the antecedent contains \(K(p \text{ entails } q)\), and knowledge is factive, it is redundant to also include \((p \text{ entails } q)\) in the antecedent. I have included it only to preserve how David and Warfield formulate this principle. Furthermore, there is no reason why believing \(q\) should be based solely on the deduction from \(p\). David and Warfield acknowledge this, and suggest replacing ‘solely based on deduction from \(p\)’ with ‘based on deduction from \(p\) and not on any defective reason’, but find it unsatisfying because ‘defective reason’ is too vague. Another, less vague alternative is: \((Kp \text{ and } K(p \text{ entails } q) \text{ and } (Bq \text{ only on the basis of deducing } q \text{ from } p, \text{ or from any other } x, \text{ such that } Kx \text{ and } K(x \text{ entails } q)), \text{ and } (p \text{ entails } q) \text{ and } (x \text{ entails } q)) \rightarrow Kq\).
At most this argument establishes a *conditional* sceptical conclusion:

\[
\text{CA: if anyone knows that } M \text{ entails not-SH and believes not-SH *solely* on the basis of deducing it from } M, \text{ then they don’t know } M.
\]

According to David and Warfield CA is not good enough for scepticism. They consider the possibility that given CA, the sceptic could argue for a broader conclusion if he could establish the following claim:

CA shows that (actual or possible) agents who satisfy the antecedent of CA don’t know any perceptual propositions that satisfy the antecedent of CA; but if *such* agents don’t know *these* perceptual propositions, then no agent knows any perceptual proposition.

For this claim to be established they assert that one would have to show that an agent who satisfies the antecedent of CA is somehow ideally situated, epistemically speaking, with respect to the relevant M. Yet there seems to be no good reason, they claim, why agents who satisfy the antecedent of CA would be ideally situated towards M. Therefore the broader sceptical conclusion doesn’t follow.

There are three things wrong with this argument. First of all, that a general sceptical conclusion has not been established does not mean that we shouldn’t be at all concerned about the conclusion that *has* been established. Suppose that Charles is an undergraduate student taking philosophy 101, and for the first time hears a sceptical hypothesis. “I’m sure you all take yourselves to know that you have hands. Now if you have hands it follows that you cannot be a bodiless brain in a vat, being stimulated in a way that makes it appear to you that you have hands. So if you wish to keep believing that you have hands, you must also believe that you’re not such a brain in a vat.”\(^{41}\) It may be supposed that, at least for a while, Charles believes that he is not a BIV *solely* on the basis of his belief that he has

\(^{41}\) The lecturer would then go on to add “but how could you know that you’re not a BIV? And if you don’t know that, how can you know that you have hands?” however, this isn’t relevant to our objection.
hands (and the recognition that the former entails the latter). Given the Sceptical Argument just offered, it follows that, for a while, Charles doesn’t know that he has hands. Surely this result is bad enough.

Secondly, David and Warfield are simply wrong to say that in order to establish the more general sceptical conclusion the sceptic needs to establish that an agent like Charles is ideally situated with respect to the proposition that he has hands. The only thing that the sceptic needs to establish is that Charles is no worse off than any other agent, with respect to such a proposition. This claim is far more modest than the claim that David and Warfield believe the sceptic needs to establish, and there is certainly nothing obvious about Charles’s situation that makes him epistemically worse off than other agents with respect to the claim that he has hands.

Lastly, in some sense, I think that even the less modest claim can be established. After all, the various counterexamples that supposedly force us to restrict the closure principle until it ends up looking like CK5 are all cases where the agent has some kind of epistemic deficiency. First he did not know that \( p \) entails \( q \); then he failed to believe \( q \) even though he knew that \( p \) entails \( q \); then he failed to believe \( q \) on the basis of deducing it from \( p \) and instead believed \( q \) for terrible reasons; finally he believed \( q \) for the right reasons, but also for terrible reasons. All of these are cases of epistemic deficiency, and so it is reasonable to suppose that if an agent doesn’t suffer from these epistemic deficiencies, and he doesn’t know that \( M \), then no agent knows that \( M \).

Thus, if one wants to avoid this conclusion, then one needs to show that agents who meet CA’s antecedent are in fact somehow epistemically worse off with respect to \( M \), than agents who don’t meet it. David and Warfield briefly present such an argument, but they don’t consider it necessary to show the inadequacy of closure based scepticism, and so may not put much stock in it. This is what they say (forthcoming: 17):

…a person who knows…[\( M \)]…can lose that knowledge upon acquiring a defeater for the reasons or grounds on which that knowledge was based. It is not very clear to anyone what “acquiring a

---

42 Perhaps being ‘no worse off’ is exactly what David and Warfield mean by ‘ideally situated’. If that is indeed what they mean, then their bold assertion that ‘there is no good reason why agents who satisfy the antecedent of CA would be ideally situation towards \( M \)’ loses any obvious intuitive worth. On the other hand, if they do mean something more than ‘no worse off’ then I see absolutely no reason why the sceptic would need to establish that.
"defeater" amounts to. But it might be held that to acquire a defeater it is sufficient, at least under certain circumstances, that the person has considered it—toyed with it mentally—even if she doesn’t believe it, or even disbelieves it. If so, one could respond to the skeptic by arguing that agents who satisfy the antecedent of CA are agents who are in an epistemically bad position with respect to…[M]. They have toyed with…[SH]…and, even though they disbelieve…[SH]…they have thereby acquired a defeater for…[M]: you know less by reflecting more.

I find this argument most unsatisfying: reflection is supposed to improve our epistemic situation, not worsen it. Reflection might rob us of belief, or certainty, but it cannot undermine our epistemic situation. Not even the contextualist goes that far. The contextualist will say that reflection can increase the standards we need to meet to be said to know, but he does not claim that reflection can worsen our epistemic situation. To make matters worse, David and Warfield’s response plays right into the sceptic’s hands. The sceptic could agree that reflecting on SH defeats one’s justification for M, without granting that reflection can worsen one’s epistemic situation. The result is that reflection makes us realise that we never had a strong enough justification for knowing M in the first place; reflection cures us of the ignorance of thinking that we aren’t ignorant.43

Their argument has a more fundamental problem. It is reasonable to think that S could fulfil the antecedent of CA without at the same time reflecting on SH. After Charles leaves the lecturer theatre and goes to lunch, the beliefs that were explicit in the lecture theatre become dormant. So if David and Warfield continue to hold fixed the assumption that Charles doesn’t know not-SH, then he also doesn’t know M. But then a great many of us are in this predicament,44 so the sceptical conclusion generalises. The contextualist avoids this by claiming that when we’re not reflecting on sceptical hypotheses, we know them to be false, and so we know M. This manoeuvre isn’t open to David and Warfield, because their aim is to show that even if we assume that we don’t know that not-SH, no general sceptical conclusion follows. They have not fulfilled this aim.

43 Of course, I disagree with the sceptic (and with David and Warfield) that reflection on SH defeats our justification for M.
44 The only difference between us and Charles being that most of us can see that not-SH follows from a whole host of our beliefs. Still, provided we believe it because it follows from only those beliefs that are all cases of knowledge, this is not a problem. See footnote 40.
I have shown that no matter how we complicate the closure principle, so long as we accept that its application is unrestricted, the sceptical conclusion will still follow (if we accept the sceptical premise). However, if David and Warfield are right that the correct closure principle is as complicated as they say it is, then the closure based sceptical argument turns out to be far less elegant and direct than it originally appeared. This somewhat undermines the persuasiveness of the argument. Given that the sceptical conclusion is very controversial, it is very tempting to simply reject one of the intuitions on which the argument depends; and the more complicated the argument, the more intuitions the sceptic is required to appeal to, so the greater the opportunity and temptation to not grant him one of those intuitions. Fortunately for the sceptic, there is a way to avoid this if we can avoid such excessive complications to the closure principle. Moreover, there is a good reason to do so even if one is not a sceptic, for we should be wary of accepting CK5 or even CK2 as good representations of the closure principle. Many philosophers consider the closure principle to be ‘axiomatic’, but if it is axiomatic, then how could it be so nuanced and cluttered like CK5? One way to avoid this without falling prey to some of those objections to CK1-CK4 is to weaken the consequent of CK1 rather than strengthen the antecedent. The upshot is that if we can find a plausible closure principle of this kind, then the sceptic can reach his conclusion in a far more direct way.

2.5 Evidential warrant. David and Warfield, in their desire to block every route for the sceptic, also consider the option of weakening the consequent, however (thinking themselves to have defeated the sceptic thus far) they find nothing that improves the sceptical position. The way they propose to weaken the consequent is to change it from ‘S knows q’ to ‘S is in a position to know q’. I will call this ‘S is warranted in believing q’, and denote as Wq. Thus CK1 can be weakened to:

\[
CW1: Kp, p \text{ entails } q, \rightarrow Wq
\]

One way to interpret ‘being warranted in believing’ is having everything required for knowledge except belief. That however, would make CW1 equivalent to:
Kp, p entails q, Bq → Kq.

This principle is prone to much the same objection as CK1. It allows that one can know that q while failing to appreciate that p entails q; even though one believes q, this principle does not require that the belief is held on the basis of p entailing q, and so there’s no reason to think that one is warranted in q. More generally – and this is the point that David and Warfield are getting at – whichever way we weaken the consequent of CK1 we could just as easily strengthen the antecedent. Consequently whatever problems the sceptic encountered down that path will be inherited down this path. David and Warfield consider a number of less precise ways of defining ‘being positioned to know’ but ultimately find nothing that they take to be of use to the sceptic.

One reading they overlook is the ‘no evidential lack’ conception of warrant. I call this ‘evidential warrant’, and denote it as WE. We can understand evidential warrant as follows:

If S is evidentially warranted in believing that p, then whatever else might be missing or impeding him in knowing that p, it is not a lack of evidence; his evidence is sufficient to know p. S should not have to do any further empirical investigation in order to know that p (but he may need to do other things).

Evidential warrant for p does not always require that one has evidence for p; it requires that one has ‘sufficient evidence for knowing’ that p. If it is possible to know that p without any evidence, then all of us automatically have evidential warrant for p. Thus, all of us have evidential warrant for every a priori truth. This remains so even if a subject lacks the concepts or mental capacity required to gain knowledge of that truth. Furthermore, one can have evidential warrant, but fail to know a proposition, and then gain knowledge of that proposition by getting more evidence. For instance, if I’ve measured the legs of a right-angle triangle, then I have evidential warrant for believing the hypotenuse to be a certain length (whatever it is); if I were to apply the Pythagorean formula I’d come to know the length without any other evidence. Still, I could come to know it by measuring it instead. If you have all the evidence you need to know a
proposition, but lack something else that’s non-evidential, you could make up for that lack by getting more evidence. This is precisely what happens when one looks up the answer to a maths problem at the back of the book instead of working it out for oneself. Lastly, two subjects can have the same evidence for one and the same proposition, but one has evidential warrant, while the other does not. If you and I are both justified in believing \( p \), but I’m in a Gettier situation while you’re not, then I need further evidence for my true belief to be knowledge, while you do not.\(^{45,46}\)

My notion of evidential warrant is similar to what some philosophers have called propositional warrant, which is in turn distinguished from doxastic warrant. If you are in possession of reasons which give you warrant for believing \( p \), then you have propositional warrant for \( p \), but this does not automatically amount to having a warranted belief that \( p \) (i.e. doxastic warrant). You may not even believe \( p \), or believe it for different reasons (which don’t warrant \( p \)). You have doxastic warrant for \( p \) only when you believe \( p \) on the basis of reasons which warrant \( p \). Evidential warrant, on my account, is roughly equivalent to propositional warrant: if you have propositional warrant for \( p \) then you don’t need to do any more empirical work in order to know that \( p \). There is however a potential difference. If you have propositional warrant for \( p \) then (according to the traditional definition) it is epistemically appropriate for you to believe that \( p \). I find this notion of ‘epistemically appropriate to believe’ to be rather vague, but to my ear having sufficient evidence to know that \( p \) does not yet make it epistemically appropriate to believe \( p \).\(^{47}\) If I have enough evidence to convict Jones of murdering Smith, this does not yet make it epistemically appropriate for me to believe that Jones murdered Smith.\(^{48}\) I may first need to piece the evidence into a coherent picture. If evidential warrant and propositional warrant were equivalent, it would be epistemically appropriate to believe

\(^{45}\) Thus evidential warrant, like knowledge, requires the satisfaction of some kind of external condition and is also factive; if I’m evidentially warranted in believing that \( p \), then \( p \) is true.

\(^{46}\) We must be careful to remember that evidential warrant is not a type of warrant; it is the weaker notion. You can be evidentially warranted in believing \( p \) without being warranted in believing \( p \), where being warranted in believing \( p \) can mean either doxastic or propositional warrant (see below).

\(^{47}\) Perhaps some philosophers think of ‘epistemically appropriate to believe’ as nothing more than ‘having sufficient evidence’. For them propositional and evidential warrant are exactly the same.

\(^{48}\) I am supposing, for the sake of argument, that having sufficient evidence to convict Jones of murder is to have sufficient evidence to know that Jones murdered Smith (i.e. to have evidential warrant).
every a priori truth even if one hasn’t reasoned one’s way to it. Evidential warrant is thus a weaker notion than propositional warrant.

2.6 Closure of evidential warrant and a direct sceptical argument. With this notion of evidential warrant we can formulate closure principles as closure of evidential warrant (CEW):

CEW1: \(Kp, p \text{ entails } q \rightarrow WEq\)

CEW2: \(WEp, p \text{ entails } q \rightarrow WEq\)

The great thing about CEW in either form, is that it allows that S might fail to appreciate that \(p\) entails \(q\), but still be evidentially warranted in believing \(q\). CEW is thus the leanest form of closure principle that is not prone to any of the standard objections to closure which forced us into a downward spiral of refinements. Secondly, CEW is neutral on the question of whether one needs any evidence to know the denials of sceptical hypotheses. If one holds that we don’t need evidence to know that not-SH, then we are always evidentially warranted in not-SH. Most importantly, CEW captures the REP intuition about closure (that if our reasons ‘guarantee’ the truth of \(p\), then they also guarantee the truth of everything entailed by \(p\)) and it does nothing more than this!

The sceptic can now use CEW2 to argue as follows:

1. S lacks sufficient evidence to know that not-SH.

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49 CWE2 very closely resembles a principle advocated by Cohen (1988: 99): if S has sufficient evidence to know \(p\), and S knows that \(p\) entails \(q\), then S has sufficient evidence to know \(q\). There is one notable difference. CWE2 does not require that S know that \(p\) entails \(q\), nor do I see why it should. S might have sufficient evidence to know that \(q\), but fail to know that \(q\) simply because he fails to see that \(p\) entails \(q\). Building that restriction into the antecedent is superfluous. Perhaps, despite their apparent similarities, Cohen does not intend his principle to be read the way I intend mine, and if so, then his principle will suffer from the kinds of inadequacies that David and Warfield prey upon.

50 This is not how Cohen sees it. He wants his principle to be read as follows: If e is sufficient evidence for S to know M (on the basis of e)...then e is sufficient evidence for S to know not-SH (on the basis of e) (1988: 119, footnote 22). He claims that, read this way, his principle would have to be rejected by someone who claims that we could know not-SH without any evidence. I don’t see how that follows. If I don’t need any evidence to know that I’m not a BIV, then it follows that if I believe that I’m not a BIV on the basis of any evidence e, then e is sufficient evidence for me to know I’m not a BIV. These considerations lead me to think that Cohen and I are understanding the notion of ‘sufficient evidence’ quite differently.
2. If S lacks sufficient evidence to know that not-SH, then S lacks sufficient evidence to know that M.

C. S lacks sufficient evidence to know that M.\textsuperscript{51}

I therefore submit that if we grant the sceptical premise, then there is a plausible version of the closure principle that directly yields the sceptical conclusion. Avoiding scepticism requires denying either the sceptical premise or CEW. The task of the next two chapters is to consider some options for denying the sceptical premise, and comparing those options with giving up closure.

\textsuperscript{51} Of course if S lacks sufficient evidence to know that M, then S doesn’t know that M. This conclusion is slightly stronger than the more traditional sceptical argument, but it seems fair to say that the only reason why the sceptic would claim that S doesn’t know that M is precisely that S lacks sufficient evidence to know that M. We could have arrived at the weaker conclusion using CEW1.
3.1 The Moorean Argument and Wright's definition of transmission failure. Anti-sceptical philosophers who do not wish to deny closure disagree with one another on how it is that we can know that sceptical hypotheses do not hold. These views can roughly be divided into two categories, depending on their position regarding the transmissibility of warrant in the Moorean Argument (MA):

MOORE-I. Undergoing an experience as of having hands. (R)
MOORE-II. I have hands. (M)
If I have hands, then I’m not a BIV.
Therefore
MOORE-III. I’m not a BIV. (not-SH).

In this schema the type-I proposition provides good but defeasible evidence for the type-II proposition, which in turn entails the type-III proposition. Thus, by hypothesis, MOORE-I provides warrant for MOORE-II.\(^{52}\) The question is whether this warrant can then be transmitted to MOORE-III, that is, whether it is possible to be moved to a rational conviction about MOORE-III by recognising that it is entailed by MOORE-II. Now it is quite clear to most people that there is something amiss about MA. Perhaps the argument begs the question against the sceptic, or even against anyone who holds some doubt about MOORE-III.\(^{53}\) After all, if you have doubt about MOORE-III, then it wouldn’t be rational to count MOORE-I as in any way supporting MOORE-II. So

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\(^{52}\) It will not concern us here whether S needs to believe MOORE-I in order for MOORE-I to warrant MOORE-II, or whether it is the experience itself which warrants MOORE-II. Also, if one goes with the latter, it is irrelevant whether S needs to be introspectively aware of the experience for it to warrant MOORE-II, or whether it warrants MOORE-II simply by being a conscious experience. For the record, I go with the least demanding of these requirements which is the very last.

\(^{53}\) An argument that fails to transmit warrant is itself an argument that begs the question; however, an argument that begs the question does not necessarily fail to transmit warrant. For instance, I would be begging the question against you if I start out with premises or assumptions that you explicitly reject, and expect you to accept the conclusion on their basis. This does not mean that the argument is circular, or fails to transmit warrant. However, if in order to be warranted in the premises I must already be convinced in the conclusion, then there is transmission failure.
perhaps the argument is incapable of helping anyone overcome doubt about MOORE-III. Still, this does not, in and of itself, show that one cannot acquire warrant for MOORE-III by going through the steps of MA. That all depends on what it takes for warrant to be transmitted across entailment. Is there a limit to when you can acquire warrant for the conclusion of a valid argument whose premises are all warranted? We may, with Wright, adopt the following definition of transmission failure:

\[
\text{WTF: if } p \text{ entails } q, \text{ but your reasons for } p \text{ give you warrant for } p \text{ only insofar as you have an antecedent warrant for } q, \text{ then you cannot acquire warrant for } q \text{ by deducing it from } p.
\]

In such a case, if you do have an antecedent warrant for \( q \), you obviously cannot acquire it by deducing \( q \) from \( p \); but if you don’t already have warrant for \( q \), then you still cannot acquire it by deducing it from \( p \) because \( p \) wouldn’t be warranted either. This is not generally an absolute characteristic of a given valid argument. One type of reason \( R_1 \) can provide a warrant for \( p \) without requiring an antecedent warrant for \( q \), while another reason \( R_2 \) cannot provide a warrant for \( p \) without a prior warrant for \( q \). In this case, if you believe \( p \) on the basis of \( R_1 \), then deducing \( q \) from \( p \) will allow you to acquire a first time warrant for \( q \), but if you believe \( p \) on the basis of \( R_2 \) then you can’t acquire a first time warrant for \( q \). Following Wright (2000) let us say that an argument which allows you to gain a first time warrant for its conclusion a cogent argument.

So how does all this bear on MA? If WTF is the right analysis of transmission failure, then it seems that whether or not MA is a case of transmission failure depends on whether MOORE-I can be a warranting reason for MOORE-II without requiring an antecedent warrant for MOORE-III: if it can be, then MA is not a case of transmission failure; if it can’t then it is. Unfortunately, this way of thinking about transmission failure, excludes the possibility that knowledge or warrant is not closed under entailment. Earlier I said that we need a principle of transmission irrespective of whether we hold closure, but that if one denies closure, then one will do so because there is a class of cases where it seems that: (a) you know that \( p \); (b) \( p \) entails \( q \) (and you may also know this); (c)

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54 The same is to be said about the Red Table Case encountered earlier.
knowledge of $p$ does not transmit to $q$; (d) you don’t know $q$ by other (prior) means. MA seems to fit this template. However adopting WTF makes (a)-(d) an inconsistent set. Now it certainly may be the case that we need a warrant for MOORE-III prior to being warranted in MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I, but that’s far from obvious. What is obvious, at least to me, is that MA appears to be a case of transmission failure independently of whether this is so. Our intuitions about when warrant fails to transmit from $p$ to $q$ can coincide with the intuition that we don’t need a warrant for $q$ prior to having a warrant for $p$. This suggests that there is a plausible way to formulate transmission failure which is neutral between closure proponents and opponents. Such a principle would cast MA as a failure of transmission irrespective of whether or not one needs to be antecedently warranted in MOORE-III before MOORE-I becomes a warranting reason for MOORE-II.

(In discussing transmission failure, we must be careful not to confuse transmission of warrant with transmission of evidential warrant. As I’ve defined evidential warrant, it isn’t possible for evidential warrant to be transmitted across any valid argument; as soon as one has evidential warrant for $p$ then, assuming CEW, one has evidential warrant for everything entailed by $p$. Even if we restrict CEW only to lightweight implications one has evidential warrant for every lightweight implication of $p$. One cannot ‘acquire’ evidential warrant by performing an inference. This obviously does not apply to warrant).

3.2 Four positions on the status of the Moorean Argument. Let us demarcate several positions on the status of MA, which fall under two arch-categories. To be conservative with respect to MA is to hold that MOORE-I counts as a warranting reason for MOORE-II only insofar as one is antecedently warranted in MOORE-III. To be liberal with respect to MA is to hold that MOORE-I counts as a warranting reason for MOORE-II even without being antecedently warranted in MOORE-III. There are two types of conservatives. A sceptic is someone who claims that it isn’t possible to be warranted in
MOORE-III.\textsuperscript{55} An \textit{idealistic} is someone who claims that it is possible to be warranted in MOORE-III (within conservative restrictions). The idealist claims that MA is a case of transmission failure, while the sceptic claims that there is no warrant for MOORE-II to transmit in the first place. There are two types of conservatives: a \textit{Moorean} holds that MA is \textit{not} a case of transmission failure, while a \textit{heretic} holds that MA \textit{is} a case of transmission failure. Mooreans also affirm, while heretics deny, that it is possible to have warrant for MOORE-III. Since heretics hold that we can have warrant for MOORE-II (in virtue of being liberal), but can’t have warrant for MOORE-III (a logical consequence of MOORE-II), they must also deny closure. (The sensitivity theory is thus a form of heresy). Pryor and Klein (and in some moods Davies) can be considered Mooreans; Wright (and in other moods Davies) can be considered idealists; I consider myself and any denier of closure a heretic.

\textit{3.3 Getting clear on what is at issue.} There are many complications about how we ought to understand ‘warrant’ as the term is used in the literature on transmission of warrant. These complications stem from the fact that there is no consistent usage between different writers. Firstly, warrant is often considered the property that turns true belief into knowledge. However knowledge always requires an external condition, but the question of whether some interesting epistemic property \textit{transmits} in MA is not at all dependant on whether any external conditions are met. So whatever sense of warrant is being used in this literature does not need to be warrant in \textit{that} sense. This is perhaps why Pryor (2004) discusses the topic of transmission failure in terms of \textit{justification} rather than warrant. Unfortunately, Wright would not be happy to talk about transmission failure in terms of justification. For Wright warrant comprises of justification as well as entitlement, (where to be entitled to believe \( p \) is for it to be epistemically appropriate to believe \( p \) without evidential or even \textit{a priori} justification), but the reason why warrant fails to transmit from MOORE-II to MOORE-III, according to Wright, is \textit{not} because one already needs to be \textit{justified} in believing MOORE-III in order to take MOORE-I as a warrant for MOORE-II, but precisely because one needs to be \textit{entitled} to believe MOORE-III in order to take

\textsuperscript{55} Though more precisely the sceptic holds that isn’t possible to even be \textit{evidentially} warranted in MOORE-III. Since evidential warrant is entailed by warrant, to deny the possibility of the latter is not necessarily to deny the possibility of the former.
MOORE-I as a justifying reason for MOORE-II. This does not mean that there is no substantive difference between Pryor and Wright. I think it is fair to say that Pryor would deny that you need any kind of positive epistemic status towards MOORE-III in order to be justified in believing MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I. On the other hand, I think there is far less of a substantive disagreement between Wright and heretics such as myself. I agree with Wright that you can’t be justified in MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I without being entitled to believe MOORE-III. I just don’t think that entitlement should count as a form of (epistemic) warrant. But that disagreement has nothing to do with transmission failure (but will be explored in the next chapter). So in the interests of making our current discussion easier, let us say that warrant is a property that attaches to propositions which makes it (rationally) appropriate to believe those propositions. On that conception of warrant, I agree that warrant is closed under entailment, but under that conception of warrant I would also consider myself a conservative idealist about MA.

There is still an issue about whether this conception of warrant adequately captures what Pryor thinks transmits in MA. For Pryor (2004: 352) justification is a property that hypotheses have for S when they’re ‘epistemically likely’ for S to be true, but it might be rationally appropriate to believe a proposition without it being epistemically likely that the proposition is true; indeed if Wright’s notion of entitlement is in good order then it is precisely the kind of thing which makes it rationally appropriate to believe a proposition without making that proposition epistemically likely for the subject. But if that’s the case, then Pryor may well admit that we have something like entitlement for MOORE-III before MOORE-I can justify MOORE-II, but then seeing as one does not first need justification for MOORE-III in order for MOORE-I to justify MOORE-II, there is nothing wrong with gaining that justification for MOORE-III, for the first time, by deducing it from MOORE-II. In other words, he could admit that one cannot, for the first time, gain a warrant (in the way defined above) for MOORE-III by deducing it from MOORE-II, but one can gain justification for MOORE-III, for the first time, by deducing it from MOORE-II.\footnote{Of course, Pryor need not interpret things in this way, and in fact Pryor (2004: 355) says that “The epistemic quality I call “justification” includes what <Wright> calls ‘entitlements’ and ‘warrants’.”}
While Pryor does not actually make this move, on a certain interpretation something like this seems to be Klein’s (2000) position. Klein holds that in the Zebra Case, one can know that the animal (which looks like a zebra) is a zebra without having to first rule out the possibility of it being a disguised mule, because there is absolutely no evidence for thinking that it is a disguised mule.\(^{57}\) For Klein one only has to eliminate possibilities for which there is at least some evidence. One can then *come to know* by deduction that it is not a disguised mule because something like the following is true:

$$\text{CK2}: \ Kp \text{ and } K(p \text{ entails } q) \rightarrow \text{is in a position to } Kq.$$

Why should we agree that alternatives for which there is no evidence need not be eliminated? It seems to me that whether or not Klein is right about this then he is still committed to claiming that it must somehow be *rational* to ignore any alternative possibility for which there is no evidence. If Klein goes along with this, then he must think that in deducing the proposition that the animal is not a disguised mule, one is acquiring some new epistemic status towards that proposition despite the fact that it was already rational to reject its opposite, presumably something like justification. One thing to note is that, as far as Klein is concerned, this is a closure move. In some sense to use closure here would be question begging, even against Wright. Although Wright thinks that closure holds for *warrant*, he does not think that it holds for evidential justification (2004: 178). Nevertheless, Klein could appeal to Wright’s own definition of transmission failure (what I earlier dubbed WTF), but restated in terms of justification: if \(p\) entails \(q\), but your reasons for \(p\) give you justification for \(p\) only insofar as you have an *antecedent* justification for \(q\), then you cannot *acquire* justification for \(q\) by deducing it from \(p\). Or to put the idea more abstractly, if \(p\) entails \(q\), but your reasons for \(p\) give you some epistemic relation \(X\) towards \(p\) only insofar as you already have \(X\) towards \(y\), then you cannot acquire \(X\) towards \(y\) by deducing it from \(p\). Klein’s inference is not at odds with these principles. So like I suggested for Pryor, Klein may well admit that *warrant*, as we’ve

\(^{57}\) This is not sufficient for knowledge, according to Klein, but only for justification. In order to have knowledge there mustn’t be any defeaters in the environment. However, in order to ‘know’ you needn’t eliminate the possibility of there being such a defeater.
defined it, cannot transmit in MA (or the Zebra Case), but justification can. In which case it looks like the Mooreans and idealists are talking past each other for they’re both right.

This line of thinking is a mistake. Wright would not agree with either of those two principles (indeed that falls out of the fact that he denies closure for justification). There is a superficial resemblance between those principles of transmission failure and Wright’s own formulation. It looks as if the motivation behind WTF is that you can gain warrant for \( q \) by deducing it from warranted belief \( p \) because you don’t already have it. This however is a coincidental feature of WTF. 58 Wright develops his account by first arguing that cases like Zebra and MA involve transmission failure and then extrapolating the underlying reasons from this. In relation to the Zebra Case and the Red Wall Case 59 Wright (2000: 154) says that when you:

...form your beliefs about the zebras and the colour of the wall, there are external preconditions for the effectiveness of your method – casual observation – whose satisfaction you will very likely have done nothing special to ensure. Made-up mules and tricky lighting involve the frustration of those preconditions. Can the warrants you acquire licitly be transmitted to the claim that those preconditions are met – or at least that they are not frustrated in those specific respects? It should seem obvious that they cannot. While you have – no doubt quite properly – taken it for granted that the conditions were generally suitable for the acquisition of reliable information by casual-perceptual means, it would be absurd to pretend that you had gained a reason for thinking so…

The thought here is that you cannot gain a reason for thinking that the animal in question is not a disguised mule by deducing it from your warranted (and justified) belief that the animal is a zebra because it not being a disguised mule is a precondition of your zebra belief being warranted that you are taking for granted. In other words, he is saying that what prevents your zebra belief from being a reason for believing that it isn’t a disguised mule isn’t the fact that you already have a reason or justification for it not being a disguised mule – you don’t, you’re only taking it for granted, though ‘properly’ so – but

58 Pryor seems to be aware of this fact (2004: 373, ft.32), however some others in the literature appear not to be. Silins (2005: 82) claims that the underlying thought behind the idealist position is that “no inference can provide your first warrant for believing a conclusion when you have warrant (independent or not) to believe the conclusion.” However, as I show below, this is not the right way to understand Wright.

59 This is a slight variation on the Red Table Case that we encountered earlier. It seems you can come to know by looking at a red wall that this is a red wall, but it seems you can’t in the same way come to know that it is not a white wall illuminated by red light.
because your justification for believing it to be a zebra depends on taking the falsity of the sceptical hypothesis for granted. Wright later goes on to argue that you cannot be warranted in believing the animal is a zebra unless you have antecedent warrant for it not being a disguised mule, and this falls out of his account because he thinks that properly taking something for granted is a form of warrant (which he calls entitlement). So it is definitely wrong to say that Pryor and Klein can appeal to Wright’s own principle, or a similarly motivated principle, to say that justification does transmit. Thus, it should clear that there is a substantive disagreement between Wright and the Mooreans.

There are potentially at least two substantive questions here.

Q1  Do we in fact need to take MOORE-III for granted in order for MOORE-I to be a justification for believing that MOORE-II?

If we don’t then I grant that there is nothing preventing us from gaining justification for MOORE-III on the basis of deduction MOORE-II. However, if we do, then we still need an answer to:

Q2  Is it possible to transmit justification from \( p \) to \( q \), when one’s justification for \( p \) depends on the taking for granted of \( q \)?

I have already said why I think that Klein needs to say yes to Q1. If the elimination of all alternatives to \( p \) for which there is at least some positive evidence is to be a form of justification for \( p \), then surely one must at least take it for granted that those alternatives for which there is no evidence are false. Pryor (2000: 519) holds a position he calls dogmatism, according to which:

when it perceptually seems to you as if \( p \) is the case, you have a kind of justification for believing \( p \), that does not presuppose or rest on your justification for anything else, which could be cited in an argument…To have this justification for believing \( p \), you need only have an experience that

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60 I have not said anything about whether or not one’s justification for \( p \) requires that we be entitled to take \( q \) for granted. This is not the important question. My claim is that what potentially blocks transmission from \( p \) to \( q \) is not any pre-existing epistemic credentials towards \( q \), but the taking for granted of \( q \).
represents \( p \) as being the case. No further awareness or reflection or background beliefs are required.

I don’t think that ‘taking something for granted’ involves a ‘background belief’, unless we adopt a very weak notion of a background belief. A man who takes it for granted that his wife will do the dishes need not have a conscious or unconscious thought about the matter. In fact, Wright introduces the notion of ‘taking for granted’ precisely for the purpose of dealing with cases where you arrive at a warranted belief by non-inferential means, so Wright, at least, is taking this notion to not involve background beliefs. Now Pryor is happy for his notion of justification to refer to whatever Wright means by ‘warrant’. And this means that Pryor definitely wants to reject the claim that we need some kind of entitlement to take MOORE-III for granted before MOORE-I can justify MOORE-II.\(^6\) However, the claim that MA fails to transmit warrant doesn’t depend on the claim that we need some positive epistemic status towards MOORE-III in order for MOORE-I to justify MOORE-II. It merely depends on the claim that we must already be taking MOORE-III for granted. So the question is, in treating one’s perceptual experience as justification for believing what the experience represents as being the case, does one take it for granted that one’s perceptual experiences are generally a reliable source of truth? Insofar as justification is supposed to make it epistemically likely for you that the proposition in question is true, then I cannot see how one can escape the claim that you must at least be taking it for granted (warrantedly or not) that your experiences are a generally reliable source of truth. If Pryor wishes to deny this, then there is a serious question about whether his notion of epistemic justification even merits the name. In any case, if he does deny that one must ‘take it for granted’ that MOORE-III holds in order for MOORE-I to justify MOORE-II, let us replace this notion with another: if you’re treating MOORE-I as a reason for accepting MOORE-II, then you are rationally committed to MOORE-III.

\(^6\) I find this claim very difficult to square with Pryor’s understanding of justification. Recall that for Pryor justification is a property that hypotheses have for you when they’re ‘epistemically likely’ for you to be true. But an entitlement to believe something does not make it likely for you to be true. Entitlements, in the way Wright understands them, are not truth conducive (though without them, truth conducive justification doesn’t get off the ground).
Note I did not say that if you believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I, then you’re rationally committed to MOORE-III. Of course that follows also, but in this case you would be rationally committed to MOORE-III in two ways: (i) because you’re taking MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II; (ii) because MOORE-III is a logical consequence of MOORE-II. If you treat MOORE-I as a reason for believing MOORE-II then you are committed to MOORE-III independently of whether you actually believe MOORE-II or whether you actually have MOORE-I as evidence. Suppose that S, who is in a world just like ours, is unlucky enough to not have any hands. Since the world is just like ours, he obviously doesn’t have an experience of having hands, and so doesn’t believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I. This however, doesn’t stop S from treating MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, for it is enough that he is merely disposed to believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I: were it to have been the case that he had an experience of having hands, he would’ve believed that he has hands. Being so disposed is what incurs the commitment to believe MOORE-III, or so I shall argue. Here are two claims:

C1. If you are treating MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II then you are rationally committed to MOORE-III.

C2. If you’re treating MOORE-I as the reason for believing MOORE-II, and if C1 holds, then you cannot acquire justification for MOORE-III on the basis of deducing it from MOORE-II.

From this we get the following account of transmission failure. If you believe that \( p \) on the basis of reason \( R \), and if taking \( R \) as justifying \( p \ commits \ you \) to \( q \), then even if \( p \) entails \( q \), inferring \( q \) from \( p \) does not transmit any (purported) justification. This definition makes no commitments about whether you need antecedent justification or warrant for MOORE-III (in whatever form), nor about whether you even have justification for MOORE-II. It merely lays down the conditions under which justification would fail to transmit if you were to have it. As such, unlike WTF, the present definition
of transmission failure is compatible with the denial of closure. Moreover, being committed to a proposition does not mean that you tacitly believe it; you may even lack the conceptual resources necessary to contemplate the thought (this will become important later). The motivation behind this notion of transmission failure is that by taking $R$ as a reason for $p$ and thereby acquiring a commitment to believing $q$, you have to be capable of honouring that commitment independently of whether you actually believe $p$. In other words, it has to be reasonable to believe $q$ whether or not you realise that $q$ follows from your (purportedly justified) belief that $p$.

### 3.4 Pryor’s case for Mooreanism

Right now it is high time that we consider some direct arguments for Mooreanism (that MA does not involve transmission failure). James Pryor has done the most to advance this view, though he has a partial ally in Martin Davies. My defence of the analysis of transmission failure just characterised will spring out of my objections to their arguments, although I consider it to simply be an elaboration and clarification of Wright’s position.

Pryor (2004) distinguishes between five notions of epistemic dependence. Two of these he takes to potentially involve transmission failure. (They’re the only ones we shall consider). What he calls **Type 5** dependence is the notion we’re already familiar with: “we have this type of dependence when having justification to believe the conclusion is among the conditions that make you have the justification you purport to have for the premise. That is, whenever you need antecedent justification to believe the conclusion as a condition for having that justification for the premise.” (2004: 359). He believes the following case exhibits Type 5 dependence:

- **CAR-I.** I intend to walk to Lot 15 and drive home.
- **CAR-II.** So I will walk to Lot 15 and drive home.
- **CAR-III.** So my car will still be in Lot 15 when I get there.

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62 I said earlier that on a certain conception of warrant, I accept closure. However, this definition of transmission failure, unlike WTF, is compatible with the denial of closure even when we define warrant in a way that’s not friendly to closure.

63 Of course Klein also defends a view of this sort, but Klein does not explicitly address the question of whether MA involves transmission failure in quite the same terms as Pryor, Wright and Davies.
The thought here is that your intention to drive home isn’t enough to justify you in believing you’ll succeed in doing so, unless you have an antecedent justification for thinking that the car is still where you remember leaving it.\(^{64}\) He distinguishes this sort of dependence from Type 4 dependence, whereby evidence against a conclusion of an argument undermines or defeats (in an undercutting way) the justification on which the premises are based. All arguments which exhibit Type 5 dependence will also exhibit Type 4 dependence. If you need antecedent justification for a conclusion before your reasons for the premise(s) can justify you in believing the premise(s), then any evidence against the conclusion would undermine your justification for the premise.\(^{65}\) However, if an argument requires a liberal treatment, then it is possible for the argument to exhibit Type 4 dependence without Type 5 dependence. MA is supposed to be a case of this kind. Pryor’s hypothesis is that arguments which exhibit (merely) Type 4 dependence, are dialectically ineffective in the sense that they cannot persuade someone who starts out with doubt about the conclusion, but they are epistemically respectable in the sense that “they articulate structures that your justification genuinely can have” and your justification to believe the premises contributes to the credibility of the conclusion (2004: 362).

For Pryor, any Type 4 argument that requires a liberal treatment (and is therefore not a Type 5 argument) will be epistemically respectable. Unfortunately, his argument for

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\(^{64}\) It is curious that Pryor chooses this example to demonstrate Type 5 dependence, rather than Vogel’s (1990) Car Theft Case from which it is obviously derived. In Vogel’s example S remembers where he leaves his car, and therefore plausibly knows where his car is, even though it sounds less plausible to say that he knows it hasn’t been stolen. It seems then that Pryor is trying to avoid controversy: we generally think that we don’t know that we will do something just because we intend to do it, but we do tend to think that we know where something is if we remember leaving it there. Does Pryor think one can know where one’s car is on the basis of memory? If not, then he falls prey to what Vogel (1990: 20-23) calls semi-scepticism. If so, then how so? Will he be a liberal or a conservative about Vogel’s Car Theft Case? If liberal then presumably he is a dogmatist about memory, which is a far less plausible position than dogmatism about perceptual justification. Even if your memory is reliable, you can hardly know on the basis of memory that an object is where you left it. If conservative, then he must explain how S can know that his car hasn’t been stolen by some other means. Whatever explanation he might give here would very likely be applicable to MOORE-III. This highlights a significant short-coming in his overall epistemological project. Even if dogmatism about perceptual justification can get us out of BIV scepticism, there are plenty of other sceptical hypotheses inconsistent with commonsense knowledge that one does not arrive at by direct perceptual means. Consequently, we either sink back into scepticism, or else we need another solution. This may very well make dogmatism redundant. See Wright (forthcoming) for a further development of this (and other) problem(s) for Pryor’s dogmatism.

\(^{65}\) I disagree with this. I believe that you may need to be warranted in the conclusion of an argument before your reasons for the premises can count as justifying even though some types of evidence against the conclusion would not undercut your justification for the premise. I address this issue in 3.5.
this does not adequately address Wright’s position. Part of the problem may be that Pryor is misinterpreting Wright. Pryor (2004: 356) thinks that according to Wright, “our perceptual beliefs about hands aren’t typically inferred from or based on prior beliefs that we’re not hallucinating; and they don’t need to be. We may just tacitly assume we’re not hallucinating.” The first part is surely right, but I don’t think that Wright would say that we need to even tacitly assume that we’re not hallucinating. We shall explore this point later at some length. Right now I bring attention to it only because Pryor’s argument against a conservative like Wright depends on this interpretation. Pryor uses the following case to motivate the idea that there are some Type 4 arguments that aren’t Type 5.

Your introspective beliefs about what sensations you’re having are fallible. You can be primed to expect sensations of cold and actually be given sensations of heat. In such cases you’ll believe that you’re having sensations you’re not having. So the hypothesis that you’re making a priming mistake looks like an underminer for your introspective justification for believing you feel cold. Evidence that you are making a priming mistake ought to diminish the credibility of your introspective belief by at least some degree. At the same time, it’s not plausible that your justification to believe you’re having a given sensation requires you to have antecedent justification to believe you’re not making any priming mistakes. Sophisticated subjects may know that they’re reliable about their sensations. But I think you can have justified beliefs about your sensations long before attaining that degree of epistemic sophistication.

So to translate this case into the I-II-III schema, let Prime-I be your sensations, Prime-II your sensation beliefs, and Prime-III that you’re not making any priming mistake. As we’ve just seen Pryor realises that on Wright’s view, the sense in which you need justification for Prime-III, before Prime-II can be justified on the basis of Prime-I does not require you to use Prime-III as a premise in justifying Prime-II on the basis of Prime-I, but he does think that according to Wright, you need to tacitly assume Prime-III before Prime-I can justify Prime-II. In other words, Pryor must think that it is implausible that anyone but a sophisticated subject would have that kind of a tacit assumption. Presumably then, if we’re not willing to grant that Prime-I can justify Prime-II without one having a tacit assumption that Prime-III, then many of us lack very basic kinds of justification. However, if I’m right that Wright does not require tacit assumptions – that
his notion of warrant is weaker than that – then Pryor has not motivated the case that there can be Type 4 arguments that aren’t also Type 5.

Let us ignore that for the time being. Suppose that you are in fact having a cold sensation, and you judge that you are on the basis of that cold sensation. From this you then infer that you really are having the sensation you think you’re having, and so you’re not making a priming mistake. Pryor (2004: 361) claims that this is an “epistemologically respectable piece of reasoning…your introspective awareness of your sensation does make the hypothesis that you’re not making a priming mistake somewhat more credible.” As far as I can see, Pryor has not provided an argument for this. For if it is plausible that being committed to Prime-III on the basis of treating Prime-I as a reason for Prime-II suffices for it being impossible to transmit justification from Prime-II to Prime-III (whether you have it or not), then Pryor’s case simply has no force. Of course, I am not insisting that he needs to have defended his view against my notion of transmission failure (which he has not seen), but I simply do not sense any positive case here either. He hasn’t offered any reason for thinking that if it’s true that “you don’t need to have any tacit assumption that Prime-III holds in order for Prime-I to justify Prime-II” then it’s true that “you can be justified in believing Prime-III on the basis of inference from Prime-II”.

This problem is compounded by the fact that he admits that “when people learn this is my view, they complain that I’m giving away too cheaply justification to believe we’re not in undermining scenarios” (2004: 362), but he provides no direct reason for thinking that they are wrong to complain. What he does do, in the next stage of his dialectic, is to argue that (merely) Type 4 dependant arguments (if such there be) are not adequate for persuading someone who starts out with doubt about the conclusion. His intention here is to explain why we feel that there is something odd about Type 4 dependent arguments, but why this does not undermine the claim that the argument displays a legitimate justificatory structure. Let’s suppose that he is successful in showing this. Still, to argue that an argument’s failure to persuade is no indication that it lacks a legitimate justificatory structure is not to argue that it has a legitimate justificatory structure. Although he takes some of his examples to demonstrate this claim, I fail to see how they can they can do so if, as he himself admits, many philosophers fail to share his
intuition about these very same examples. Giving us an explanation as to why we fail to share his intuition about those examples does not vindicate his intuition about them.

In any case, let us consider his argument for the claim that a failure to persuade is not necessarily a failure to transmit justification. Recall the distinction made in section 2.5 between having a justification to believe (propositional justification), and a belief that is justified or well-founded (doxastic justification). You may have a belief for which you have justification, but which is not itself justified because you’re not holding that belief for the right reasons. Now it sometimes happens that we acquire evidence which undermines our justification. Jack tells me that he scored a high distinction on his economics exam. This gives me prima facie justification for believing that he did in fact score a high distinction on his economics exam. If later I find out from Jill (without her knowing what Jack told me) that Jack often lies to make himself out to be better than he is, then my initial justification would be undermined. On the other hand, suppose that I, for no good reason, come to believe that Jack often lies to make himself look better than he is. According to Pryor this would not undermine my justification for believing that he scored a high distinction. It would however, make it irrational for me to believe that he scored a high distinction simply on the basis of his testimony. So if I were to believe that he scored a high distinction for this reason, while also believing that his testimony is unreliable, my belief that he scored a high distinction would not be well-founded.

Moreover, the same applies to having an unfounded doubt about the reliability of Jack’s testimony.

More generally consider a valid argument from $p_1 \ldots p_n$ to $q$ where you in fact have justification for each of the premises. Suppose that for no good reason you come to doubt whether $p_1$ really is true, or whether the argument really is valid. Your doubt would prevent you from rationally accepting $q$, but because you still have justification for all the premises, you still have justification for believing the conclusion. You can’t avail yourself of this justification, but you do have it. Pryor says that the same applies to all arguments that display a Type 4 dependency, such as MA. If you have a justified doubt about MOORE-III, then you will lose justification for believing MOORE-II. However, when your doubt is not justified, then you will retain justification for MOORE-II, and subsequently for MOORE-III as well, but you will be rationally obstructed from helping
yourself to this justification. In other words, you will have propositional justification, but you will be rationally obstructed from having doxastic justification. The punch-line, according to Pryor (2004: 366), is that this “won’t be the argument’s fault. It’ll be your fault, for having doubts where no doubt is justified.” Arguments that display this justificatory structure lack persuasive power, the power to overcome doubt about the conclusion, but this does not mean that their justificatory structure is deficient.

Perhaps these considerations allow Pryor to avoid my accusation that he does not establish that Type 4 arguments have a legitimate justificatory structure even though the examples he offers do not adequately demonstrate this. The thought is this. Since just about any argument can fail to persuade someone of the conclusion if they hold certain unjustified doubts, and we allow that many arguments do transmit warrant, then this can hardly be considered an epistemic failing. As Pryor puts it (2004: 366) “we just saw that unjustified doubts can make it irrational for you to accept the conclusions of perfectly respectable arguments, like standard proofs of the Pythagorean Theorem. These Type 4 arguments are a special case, where your doubts happen to be about the very proposition that is the argument’s conclusion. But that makes no epistemological difference.” This doesn’t address my objection head on – it is still the case that Pryor’s examples fail to adequately establish that Type 4 arguments have a legitimate justificatory structure – but if Pryor is right that there is no epistemological difference between whether the doubt is about the conclusion itself or some other feature of the argument, then we better agree that Type 4 arguments transmit warrant or else no argument transmits warrant.66

At this stage of the dialectic it makes sense to mention how Davies (forthcoming) views the matter. Davies distinguishes between two types of epistemic projects, that of deciding what to believe, and that of settling the question. These two epistemic projects are governed by different epistemic norms so that a way of coming to believe may breach the norms of one project, but not the other. Thus, for Davies, there are two notions of transmission failure, each corresponding to a different set of norms that could be breached. Davies argues that MA cannot be used to settle the question whether or not

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66 Pryor does not actually say that we better agree that Type 4 arguments transmit warrant or else no argument transmits warrant. This is to be expected given that he takes himself to have established that Type 4 arguments have a legitimate epistemic structure on the basis of examples. I am considering this response on his behalf because I disagree that his examples demonstrate that Type 4 arguments are legitimate.
MOORE-III holds, but assuming a liberal treatment of MA (with which he is at least sympathetic), then there is nothing epistemically wrong with deciding to believe MOORE-III on the basis of MOORE-II. Thus, Davies agrees with Pryor in one sense but not in another: being unable to overcome doubt is an epistemic failing, and that’s the problem with MA, but this does not mean that it is epistemically inadequate to believe MOORE-III on the basis of inferring it from MOORE-II.67

The two epistemic projects roughly correspond to Pryor’s distinction between a legitimate justificatory structure, and dialectic effectiveness.68 A little while later we shall consider whether Davies does an adequate job of defending the view that there is nothing epistemically wrong with deciding to believe MOORE-III on the basis of its entailment from MOORE-II. What is of primary interest to us right now is that, unlike Pryor, Davies believes that being unable to settle the question (overcome doubt about) whether MOORE-III holds, is an epistemic failing. I have argued above that Pryor does not adequately establish that MA has a legitimate justificatory structure, but that if he is right that such Type 4 arguments are no more epistemically problematic than ordinary arguments, then we better allow that they do have a legitimate justificatory structure, or else no argument has a legitimate justificatory structure. Now if Type 4 arguments cannot settle whether their conclusion is true or false, while ordinary arguments can, and if (as Davies holds) this is an epistemic failing, then it follows that we need not allow that Type 4 arguments have a legitimate epistemic structure in order to continue believing that normal arguments do.69

Davies claims that in the project of settling the question of whether or not a proposition q is true, one must begin by regarding q as open pro tem. Such an attitude does not require that one have a genuine doubt about q – one may even continue to believe that q – what it requires is a suppositional doubt about q. This suppositional doubt conditions the conduct of the project by limiting which of your epistemic warrants you can rationally deploy in defence of q. As we’ve already seen, when we doubt MOORE-III

67 If truth be told, I find Davies’s position somewhat schizophrenic, but I shall not argue against it on that basis.
68 More accurately, the norms for the project of deciding what to believe are meant to spring out of what makes an argument’s justificatory structure legitimate, and the norms for the project of settling the question spring out of what makes an argument dialectically effective.
69 Of course Davies is not concerned with showing this since, like Pryor, he does allow that (merely) Type 4 arguments have a legitimate epistemic structure.
we are unable to help ourselves to our justification for MOORE-II. This is no less the case with merely suppositional doubt. Now recall that according to Pryor, your doubts about the conclusion of MA are unjustified, and that therefore, when you’re having such doubt, the fact that you’re rationally obstructed from helping yourself to the justification which you supposedly have is no fault of the argument; it is your fault for having doubts you aren’t justified in having. But it is pretty clear that this comment is meant to apply to the kind of doubt where you have some degree of disbelief. If you suspect, without reason or evidence, that you’re in a sceptical scenario, then you’re doing something wrong. However, if it is the kind of doubt where you merely withhold judgement about MOORE-III then it would be inappropriate to do so only if you have sufficient reason not to withhold judgement. Suppositional doubt is even less demanding than that. When you suppositionally doubt p you consider what warrants are rationally open for you to deploy if you were to doubt p. Thus it is always appropriate to suppositionally doubt p. Now what Davies is claiming is that in settling the question as to whether the conclusion of a certain argument holds, you are required to suppositionally doubt that conclusion. The significance of this – what I take to be Davies’s punch-line – is that settling the question of whether the conclusion of an argument is true cannot be anything other than an epistemic project. If a given argument is epistemically legitimate (in every sense), then it ought to be the kind of argument that can settle the truth of its conclusion.

Pryor has claimed that to doubt the conclusion of a Type 4 argument, and therefore to deprive oneself of the justification for that conclusion is no different, epistemologically speaking, from when certain doubts makes it irrational to believe the conclusion of perfectly acceptable arguments. We can now say what is wrong with this claim. It is simply that, in the case of uncontroversial arguments, to settle the question as to whether the conclusion is true, there is no requirement to make any suppositions that would make it irrational to believe the conclusion. Consider the Swan Case:

SWAN-I I’m having an experience of a black swan

70 I think that Pryor’s argument that a dialectical failing is not an epistemic failing founders here as well. Suppose one simply withholds judgement about MOORE-III. How can one, in this instance, take MOORE-I as a justifying reason for MOORE-II? If one can’t do that, then one also can’t believe MOORE-III on the basis of MOORE-II.
SWAN-II  There is a black swan  
If there is a black swan then some birds are black  
Therefore,  
SWAN-III  Some birds are black  

Suppose I were to doubt SWAN-III (which is what I am required to do to settle whether the conclusion is true). In this case I could still rationally count SWAN-I as a reason for SWAN-II. That is, it is possible to start out with doubt about SWAN-III (say because I’ve never seen a black bird before), then undergo an experience of a black swan, and then on that basis rationally come to believe SWAN-II (and subsequently SWAN-III).\textsuperscript{71} Now I could also suppose that my colour vision is not working properly, and under this supposition I will not be able to justify SWAN-II on the basis of SWAN-I, but this supposition is not a requirement for the proper conduct of settling whether SWAN-III is true. On the other hand, to settle whether MOORE-III is true there is a requirement for me to suppose that MOORE-III might well be false, and under this supposition, there is no possible situation in which an experience of having hands can rationally count as a reason for me to believe MOORE-II.

So the problem with MA is not merely that if you start out with doubt about MOORE-III then you’re rationally obstructed from helping yourself to your (supposed) justification for MOORE-II. If that were the only problem then, indeed, epistemologically speaking, this would be no different from having doubts that rationally obstruct you from helping yourself to the justification for the conclusions of perfectly acceptable arguments. The problem is that in the project of settling whether the conclusion is true, one is required to suppose that the conclusion may well be false. In the case of Type 4 arguments (but not ordinary arguments) this supposition rationally prevents you from

\textsuperscript{71} Davies (forthcoming) does not characterise failure to settle the question in quite these terms. For him an argument which cannot settle the question is one in which doubting the conclusion will directly commit one to a belief that would defeat the warrant for one of the premises rather than going via doubt about one of the premises. Doubting MOORE-III directly commits you to a belief according to which MOORE-I is no evidence for MOORE-II. Doubting SWAN-III can also commit you to a belief according to which SWAN-I is no evidence for SWAN-II, but only because the doubt is mediated by doubt about the premise SWAN-II. This is essentially the same as my characterisation. An argument that can settle the question is one where it is rationally possible to initially have doubt about the Type-III proposition, and yet still consider the Type-I proposition to be evidence for the Type-II proposition. An argument fails to settle the question when this is not rationally possible.
helping yourself to the justification for that conclusion. It is possible to have doubts that prevent you from helping yourself to the justification for the conclusion of ordinary arguments, but having such doubts, suppositionally or otherwise, is not required to settle the question about their conclusion. Consequently, we do not need to allow that Type 4 arguments have a legitimate epistemic structure in order to allow that ordinary arguments do, and so the claim that Type 4 arguments have a legitimate justificatory structure has not yet been established.

3.5 Arguments that suffer from Type 5 dependence, but not Type 4 dependence. While I take the considerations above to adequately establish the conclusion we were aiming for, there are some complications that need ironing out. In particular there is a type of argument which is generally taken to be a case of transmission failure, but which does not seem to breach the norms of settling the question, at least as I’ve described them and therefore does not suffer from Type 4 dependence. Consider the now familiar Soccer Case from Wright (2002):

SOCCER-I. Jones has just kicked the ball between the white posts.
SOCCER-II. Jones has just scored a goal.
   Therefore
SOCCER-III. A game of soccer is taking place.72

According to Wright this case fails to transmit warrant since it is only because SOCCER-I normally provides evidence directly for SOCCER-III that it is able to provide evidence for SOCCER-II. That is, you cannot acquire warrant for SOCCER-III by recognising that it is entailed by SOCCER-II because you must already consider SOCCER-III to be supported by SOCCER-I before you can consider SOCCER-I to support SOCCER-II.

According to Davies, an argument fails to settle the question about its conclusion if, were I to start out with doubt about that conclusion, then I would not be able to rationally avail myself of the reasons offered in support of that conclusion. Now on one

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72 For the purposes of this example we’re supposing that goal scoring can only occur in the event of a soccer game taking place.
plausible reading of this requirement, doubting SOCCER-III does prevent me from taking
SOCCER-I as a reason for SOCCER-II. If I doubt SOCCER-III while realising that Jones
kicked the ball between the white posts, then obviously I cannot rationally regard this as a
reason for thinking that Jones has just scored a goal. But on this reading of the
requirement, every argument will fail to settle the question about its conclusion. In the
Swan Case, if I doubt that some birds are black while realising that I am having an
experience as of a black swan, then I also cannot rationally regard this experience as a
reason for thinking that there is a black swan. For me to count SWAN-I as a reason for
SWAN-II I cannot doubt SWAN-III while accepting SWAN-I. This is not the way we
earlier diagnosed the Swan Case. What made us say then that the Swan Case can settle
the question, (but MA cannot), is that in the Swan Case, it is rationally possible to start
out doubting the conclusion and then overcome that doubt by discovering or considering
the evidence one has. In other words one should suppositionally doubt the conclusion
prior to considering what evidence one has in favour of it. But on this understanding of
the requirement, the Soccer Case comes out acceptable. SOCCER-I is, after all, evidence
for SOCCER-III, and so even if I start out with doubt about SOCCER-III, I can still use
SOCCER-I to support SOCCER-II because I can give up my doubt about SOCCER-III
upon considering SOCCER-I. Why then does the Soccer Case appear to involve
transmission failure?

Wright (2002: 335) suggests the following reason. If SOCCER-I stops being
evidence for SOCCER-III, say because you’re in the vicinity of a film studio and know
that it is just as likely that this is a scene staged for the camera as a real game, then
SOCCER-I will also stop being evidence for SOCCER-II. In these conditions, you’d need
independent reason for thinking that it is a real game in order for SOCCER-I to once
again warrant SOCCER-II. If you ask a bystander, and learn from him that the game is
real, then you once again have warrant for thinking that a goal has been scored, but in
these circumstances it is absurd to claim that you have acquired warrant for thinking that
there is a game in progress by deducing it from SOCCER-II. Rather, you needed to
acquire warrant for SOCCER-III before you could be warranted in SOCCER-II.

I don’t agree with Wright that this marks the Soccer Case as different from
genuine cases of transmission. Imagine that scientists have very recently discovered that
every time they closely examine a black bird it turns out to have been painted black. They don’t know whether all black looking birds are in fact not black, but every new black looking bird they’ve examined so far has turned out to not be black. Now suppose that you’re having an experience as of a black swan. If you know about this recent scientific discovery, then you should have no reason to think that there is a black swan. You leave the matter as it is, without examining the bird any closer. Later you find out that scientists have discovered some genuinely black birds. This will, at least to some extent, restore the warranting power of your previous experience. You’d know that there is at least some chance that there was a black swan when you had that experience. Still, as with the Soccer Case, you cannot in this way gain a reason for thinking that there is at least some chance that some birds are black. Rather, you first had to gain a reason for thinking that some birds are black before SWAN-I could count as a reason for SWAN-II.

Wright provides us with another consideration. He says (2002: 334-335):

Let the evidence for SOCCER-II be what is described by SOCCER-I and more: the driving of the ball into the net, the apparent congratulations of team-mates, the referee’s response, etc. Is any warrant supplied by all this for SOCCER-II transmissible across the entailment to Soccer III?...If our collateral information includes, what is doubtless the actual case, that scenes of the kind witnessed seldom occur except in the context of real soccer matches, then our evidence certainly is evidence for SOCCER-III. But that’s not to say that the warrant we have for SOCCER-III should be regarded as transmitted via the inference from SOCCER-II. On the contrary: we would have had that warrant for SOCCER-III, on the basis of the very same evidence, even if we had also noticed the referee’s assistant’s flag raised to mark an infringement – and reckoned it quite likely that the defending team would direct the referee’s attention to that fact in the next few seconds. In that case we’d have what is essentially the same warrant for SOCCER-III without, yet at least, having a warrant for SOCCER-II at all. So we should deny that there is genuine transmission of warrant from SOCCER-II to SOCCER-III even in the scenario where the official’s flag remains down.

Compare for reductio. You’re looking at what appears to be a black swan. Your friend tells you that scientists have recently discovered a bird that looks a lot like a swan, but which is, in fact, a different species. Assuming you give credence to your friend’s testimony then you will still have warrant for SWAN-III without, yet at least, having a
warrant for SWAN-II. So we should deny that there is genuine transmission of warrant from SWAN-II to SWAN-III even in the scenario where your friend does not tell you of such a scientific discovery.

Still, I do consider the Soccer Case to involve transmission failure, though in a less clear way than MA. Earlier, in my interpretation of Wright, I said that you cannot acquire warrant for SOCCER-III by recognising that it is entailed by SOCCER-II because you must already consider SOCCER-III to be supported by SOCCER-I before you can consider SOCCER-I to support SOCCER-II. This is partially right. It is not so much that you must already consider SOCCER-III to be supported by SOCCER-I (that’s one option); rather, you must consider SOCCER-III to already be supported, one way or another, or at the very least you must have an actual belief that SOCCER-III is true, before you can consider SOCCER-I to support SOCCER-II. This is because we do not normally ask ourselves whether a goal has just been scored, or what evidence we have for thinking that it has, unless we already take ourselves to be observing a soccer game. This is not so in the Swan Case. When undergoing an experience of what looks like a black swan it is quite appropriate to ask yourself whether this is indeed a black swan, without having given any prior thought to whether or not there are any black birds.

It is not an integral feature of soccer goals that we need to already believe SOCCER-III before we can think that a soccer goal has just been scored. My friend John, who has been watching television for the past hour, comes to my room to inform me that Manchester United has just scored a goal. This counts as evidence that a goal has been scored, and it also counts as evidence that a soccer game is taking place, but I need not have first thought that a soccer game is taking place before I can count John’s testimony as evidence that a goal has just been scored. Why is John’s testimony different from seeing Jones kick the ball between the white posts? Suppose that, instead, my friend Raul comes to my room and says that Jones has just kicked the ball between the white posts. (Raul has bad English and doesn’t know how to say that Jones has scored a goal). This ought to count as very little evidence for anything, but I can perhaps make sense of it if I assume that Raul is talking about a soccer game. One way this might come about is if I already believe that Raul was observing a soccer game.
Some information only counts as evidence for a particular proposition within a certain context, and if that context is missing, then we need to make assumptions about our situation for the information to make sense. Seeing Jones kick a ball between the white posts will count as evidence that a goal has been scored only in the context of what we take to be a soccer game, and being told that he has, requires us to assume that we’re being told about a soccer game. On the other hand, being told that Manchester United has scored a goal makes it clear enough that the context is about a soccer game (assuming we already know that Manchester United is a soccer team). Note that I do not mean that it simply provides evidence that a soccer game is taking place. It does that and more. Witnessing a goal being scored also counts as evidence that a soccer game is taking place, but sensory information does not set up a context for interpreting information. Context is determined either by our background beliefs, or else by adopting the context of our conversational partner by virtue of being cooperative communicators.73

When John tells us that Manchester United has scored a goal, he wants us to think, and provides us with adequate information for thinking that he wants us to think, that he is talking about a soccer game. This does not automatically mean that he has provided us with evidence that a soccer game is taking place, but only that he is talking about a soccer game. Given this context, we now have good evidence for thinking that a goal has been scored, and on this basis we can infer and, for the first time, arrive at the belief that a soccer game is taking place. We need not have thought that a soccer game is taking place for his testimony to count as evidence that a goal has been scored because knowing (or even thinking) that he is talking about a soccer game is already enough for that.

On the other hand, when Raul tells us that Jones has just kicked the ball between the white posts, we need to search around for hypotheses about what he means. Perhaps we already know that a soccer game should be taking place at around this time, and so come to think that Raul may very well be watching it on television. If this is the case, then we will count his testimony as evidence for SOCCER-II only because we already believe SOCCER-III, so we cannot arrive at SOCCER-III for the first time by deducing it from SOCCER-II. Or perhaps we know that Raul is a soccer nut and that every second

73 It is plausible that the second way of settling on a context is parasitic on the first.
thing he says is about soccer. In this case, his testimony will count as evidence for SOCCER-II without us first believing SOCCER-III. So whether or not this case will involve transmission failure will vary depending on how we arrive at SOCCER-II from the information he gives us.

Lastly, when we see Jones kick the ball between the white posts, no one is trying to get us to adopt a particular context for interpreting their utterance, but we do have a lot of information – seeing the kick and a lot of other collateral information – that helps us to settle on a context of interpretation ourselves. When no one is trying to get us to adopt a particular context, then we settle on a context by holding fixed what we take to be true. And it seems reasonable that, at a minimum, for us to settle on a context in which SOCCER-I can rationally count as evidence for thinking SOCCER-II, we need to hold fixed the fact that we’re witnessing a soccer game. Thus, we cannot, in this case arrive at SOCCER-III for the first time by deducing it from SOCCER-II. This is in stark contrast with the Swan Case, where SWAN-I appears to support SWAN-II even if you haven’t given any thought to SWAN-III.

I have argued that the Soccer Case does involve transmission failure even though it does not breach the norms that condition the project of settling the question. The Soccer Case fails to transmit warrant because some Type-I propositions count as evidence for the Type-II proposition, only when the Type-III proposition is explicitly held fixed. Since one is required to believe proposition-III before proposition-I can be taken as evidence for proposition-II, one cannot arrive at a rational conviction about proposition-III for the first time by inferring it from proposition-II. Naturally, for proposition-I to be taken as evidence that is actually good enough to warrant proposition-II, one must not merely believe proposition-III. This belief must itself be warranted.

Thus the Soccer Case appears to be a typical example of Type 5 dependence. This is not surprising. What is surprising is that it is a case of Type 5 dependence without being a case of Type 4 dependence. It is possible to have evidence against SOCCER-III without undercutting your justification for SOCCER-II, or to simply start out doubting

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74 When I say ‘explicitly held fixed’ I do not mean that one must actively have such a thought. It can be a background belief. However, it cannot be something that one is merely taking for granted. It is an actual cognitive state, rather than a proposition to which one is rationally committed without having ever yet thought.
SOCCER-III and still rationally count SOCCER-I as evidence for SOCCER-II. Despite this, one must first come to believe SOCCER-III before SOCCER-I can warrant SOCCER-II. We have here a case that can settle the question about its conclusion despite the fact that it fails to transmit warrant.

The following situation should clinch the case. I ask John to call me when the game starts. Twenty minutes later John still hasn’t called, but I come anyway. Looking at the television, I see the soccer players kicking the ball around and ask John why he didn’t call. To this John responds that the game hasn’t started yet, that they’re just warming up. A moment later however, we both see Jones kicks the ball between the white posts, the crowd going wild, other players patting Jones on the back, etc. (Let all that be SOCCER-I). John’s testimony is surely evidence that the game hasn’t started yet, but it does not undercut the evidence that I just now gained for thinking that a goal has been scored.\(^{75}\) Despite this, I must still come to believe SOCCER-III before I can count SOCCER-I as supporting SOCCER-II. I would reason thus. Jones has just kicked the ball between the white posts and the crowd went wild, etc. This wouldn’t have happened unless I were watching an actual soccer match rather than a warm up (as I’ve never seen a warm up where the crowd goes wild from a ball being kicked between the white posts). So there is a soccer game in progress. So what I just saw was Jones scoring a goal.

One could object that this case breaches the norms that condition the project of settling the question precisely because SOCCER-I doesn’t count as evidence for SOCCER-II unless I have already overcome my doubt about SOCCER-III. This is to insist that to test whether an argument can settle the question, one must only attempt to overcome doubt about the conclusion by going through the steps of the argument. I do not see however, why we should consider this norm to be necessary for settling the question. What matters for the project of settling the question is that we settle the question, not that we do so in any particular order. Regarding the conclusion as open should not obstruct us from arriving at the conclusion by going through the argument, period. It does not matter that we cannot arrive at the conclusion for the first time by going through the argument (that seems like a norm for a different project). At any rate, it

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\(^{75}\) I take it that the order should not matter here. Regardless of the order in which the evidence arrives, John’s testimony is evidence which competes with SOCCER-I, it does not undercut this evidence.
is certainly wrong to say that John’s testimony against SOCCER-III *undercuts* the evidence I have for SOCCER-II,\(^7^6\) and this is so despite the fact that I must *first* deploy SOCCER-I in coming to believe SOCCER-III before I can deploy SOCCER-I in coming to believe SOCCER-II. Thus, the Soccer Case is Type 5 dependant without being Type 4 dependant. An argument which is not Type 4 dependant can be dialectically effective in convincing someone of the conclusion; there is no reason to insist that settling the question should require anything more than that.

Of course, if the Soccer Case is indeed an example of transmission failure, then there must be an epistemic project with norms that would be violated by someone going through the I-II-III steps of the Soccer Case. That’s precisely what we get with Davies’s project of deciding what to believe (as we shall see in a moment). However, Davies claims that arguments which fail to transmit warrant according to the norms of the project of deciding what to believe, will typically also fail to settle the question. If I’m right however, then the two notions of transmission failure which he identifies are even more distinct than he originally thought.\(^7^7\) We should not be surprised by this. The Soccer Case and the Swan Case both share the feature that proposition-I counts as evidence for proposition-III, and in this way they both differ from MA; MOORE-I doesn’t count as evidence for MOORE-III. Thus we ought to have expected there to be an epistemic project that distinguishes between MA on the one hand, and the Soccer Case and Swan Case on the other.

\(^{76}\) We have already seen that if we were to describe this as a case of undercutting, then we are forced to say that any evidence against SWAN-III will necessarily undercut SWAN-I from supporting SWAN-II.

\(^{77}\) Davies does acknowledge that there are arguments which can settle the question even though it is not appropriate to decide to believe the conclusion on the basis of the premises, but the phenomenon he has in mind is considerably different from the one that I have diagnosed. The following example, due to Sorensen (1991), appears to be capable of settling the question even though it is blatantly circular:

Some arguments are composed solely of existential generalisations.

Therefore:

Some arguments are composed solely of existential generalisations.

Clearly you cannot gain warrant for the conclusion for the first time by gaining warrant for the premise, but having an initial doubt about the conclusion does not prevent you from overcoming that doubt by realising that this argument itself is composed solely of an existential generalisation. Despite this Davies claims that “arguments that are cases of transmission failure according to <the standards of deciding what to believe> and are so because of circularity…involving a background assumption for which an antecedent warrant is required, will also be cases of transmission failure according to <the standards of settling the question>.” I take myself to have shown that the Soccer Case violates this claim. SOCCER-III must be a warranted background assumption if SOCCER-I is to count as warranting evidence for SOCCER-II, but having suppositional doubt about SOCCER-III does not directly commit one to a supposition which makes it impossible to rationally treat SOCCER-I as evidence for SOCCER-II.
3.6 *The project of deciding what to believe and the idealist position*. We have yet to establish whether or not MA has a legitimate justificatory structure, that is, whether or not deciding to believe MOORE-III on the basis of MOORE-II is an epistemically respectable thing to do. Davies believes that this will depend on whether we treat MA liberally or conservatively, and describes the epistemic norms that condition the project of deciding what to believe accordingly. There is however, at least a prima facie reason for thinking that MA does not have a legitimate justificatory structure either way. We can see this if we reflect on what, to me, appears to be an inconsistency within Pryor’s work. Recall that for Pryor, arguments (such as MA) whose premises have a Type 4 dependence on the conclusion can still contribute to the *credibility* of the conclusion. I don’t see how that can follow if these very same arguments are supposed to be ineffective in resolving doubt. For the premises to *contribute* credibility to the conclusion there must be some reservation about the conclusion prior to considering the premises. What can Pryor possibly mean by “contributes to the credibility” of the conclusion, other than that it helps you increase your confidence in $q$ and thereby overcome some of your reservations? But resolving doubt is precisely what Type 4 dependant arguments cannot do, as he himself argues.

Perhaps what Pryor has in mind is that you can start out with no attitude at all towards MOORE-III, and upon realising that it is entailed by MOORE-II, you acquire some credibility for it. This however, is not an adequate way of describing how credibility is acquired. If it were then you could in this way gain some credibility for the conclusions of blatantly Type 5 arguments, which Pryor says do not have a legitimate justificatory structure. For instance, going back to the Car Case in 3.4, suppose that you have no attitude at all towards CAR-III. Presumably this prevents you from being warranted in CAR-II on the basis of CAR-I, but it would not prevent CAR-I from giving *some* credibility to CAR-II.\(^{78}\) Now if Pryor is right that MOORE-II gives credibility to MOORE-III when you start out with no attitude towards MOORE-III, then there is no

\(^{78}\) If you *intend* to walk to Lot 15 and drive home, this gives you *some* reason for thinking that you *will* walk to Lot 15 and drive home, even though (according to Pryor) it doesn’t give you *enough* of a reason to *justifiable believe* that you will (unless you have enough reason to believe that your car will still be in Lot 15 when you get there).
reason why CAR-II cannot contribute credibility to CAR-III. Since Pryor would reject that Type 5 arguments can contribute credibility to their conclusion, there must be something wrong with that way of describing how credibility is acquired. With regards to acquiring credibility on the basis of valid inference, I see no plausible way of distinguishing between Type 5 and purportedly Type 4 arguments. Hence I struggle to see how deciding to believe MOORE-III by deducing it from MOORE-II can be an epistemically respectable thing to do quite independently of whether we are conservative or liberal about MA.

Most of what Davies says about the norms governing the project of deciding what to believe is aimed at showing that if the correct treatment of MA is conservative then, indeed, deciding to believe MOORE-III on the basis of deduction from MOORE-II is a kind of epistemic failing. The gist of the matter is that one ought to structure one’s network of beliefs in a way that conforms to the structure of the abstract space of warrants by being ‘responsive’ to that structure. One needs to *recognise* the correct warranting structure, and then conform to it. Now if, as the conservatives think, you need to have warrant for MOORE-III prior to being able to acquire warrant for MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I, and if, as the idealist thinks (and the sceptic denies), you do in fact have (propositional) warrant for MOORE-III, then if you come to believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I without first appreciating your warrant for MOORE-III, you’d be doing well epistemically in one way: you believe something for which you have a warrant to believe; but not in another: you did not arrive at that belief in the right way, and so you lack doxastic warrant. Similarly, if you then come to believe MOORE-III by inference from MOORE-II, you would believe something for which you do have warrant, but again, the belief isn’t well founded. (It is crucial to notice that, according to Davies, you’re not actually committing an epistemic sin when you come to believe MOORE-III via inference. The error crept in when you came to believe MOORE-II without first determining whether or not you’re warranted in believing MOORE-III. The only thing wrong with subsequently coming to believe MOORE-III is that you’re building on top of an ill foundation). On the other hand, if the structure in the space of warrants for MA is as the liberal says it is then, according to Davies, since you can be warranted in MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I without first being warranted in MOORE-III, coming to
believe MOORE-III by deducing it from MOORE-II is not building on top of an ill foundation, and so does not breach any epistemic norms.

I don’t think that Davies has adequately characterised the idealist position, at least not if the idealist in question is Wright, who is, of course, Davies’s target. The norms that Davies describes are suitable for a conservative treatment of the Soccer Case: if you do not first appreciate your warrant for SOCCER-III, then you’re doing something wrong if you come to believe SOCCER-II on the basis of SOCCER-I. However, those same norms do not adequately capture what goes wrong with MA when assuming a conservative treatment. Recall the passage from Wright we quoted earlier: “while you have – no doubt quite properly – taken it for granted that the conditions were generally suitable for the acquisition of reliable information by casual perceptual means…” (2000: 154), and later on he adds: “it may be that, for one reason or another, I am not required to bother about <the sceptical possibility>” (2000: 155) (my emphasis). Wright’s thinking seems to be that you’re not doing anything epistemically inappropriate by forming beliefs without appreciating your warrant against sceptical possibilities. Elsewhere, Wright (2004: 205) says “entitlement had better…be comparable to rights of basic inference…if any but a few philosophers are to benefit from a vindication of the notion.” The comparison to the rights of inference that he’s making here is that “where a valid pattern of inference demands no special training but is followed by the ‘light of natural reason’, we will naturally credit a thinker with warrant to proceed as she does, even if she has given no explicit thought to that way of proceeding and would not have the slightest idea how to answer if a request for justification was made” (2004: 204). In short, Wright holds that you need not appreciate your entitlement to reject SH, or be able to explain why you have an entitlement to reject SH, in order to form warranted beliefs which rely on this entitlement in order to be so warranted.

This is not how Davies views Wright’s position. Davies (2004) takes Wright to be claiming that we need to have an actual attitude towards a proposition like MOORE-III, an attitude of a background belief, (or more modestly an attitude of trust), and that one
must be entitled to hold this attitude, before one can have a warranted belief in MOORE-II. 79 For Davies (2004: 229-230) this is highly implausible because:

In the case of a perceptual warrant, a thinker may simply take the deliverances of perceptual experience as veridical, without having in mind the assumption that the deliverances of perceptual experience are veridical. Certainly a thinker need not have in mind any assumptions about lighting conditions being normal, about perceptual apparatus working properly, or about not being the envatted victim of a powerful but deceptive scientist. A thinker could have a perceptual warrant for a belief while lacking the intellectual resources even to formulate such assumptions.

According to Davies, the only thing that an agent needs with respect to anti-sceptical propositions like MOORE-III is an entitlement not to doubt them. This is consistent with not having any attitude towards them. Davies thinks that this is not a kind of warrant at all. Consequently, since you can come to have a warranted belief in MOORE-II without being warranted in MOORE-III, then it is proper for you to decide to believe MOORE-III (for the first time) by deducing it from MOORE-II. If on the other hand, one needs to have a warranted positive attitude towards MOORE-III before one can have a warranted belief in MOORE-II (as he takes Wright to be claiming), then warrant doesn’t transmit. He finds this position implausible for the (quoted) reasons above.

I agree with Davies that one need not have in mind any assumptions about the credibility of one’s perceptual experiences in order to form warranted beliefs on the basis of those experiences. What I disagree with is that Wright has claimed otherwise. 80 More significantly, even if I’ve interpreted Wright incorrectly, I believe that Wright can consistently claim that MA fails to transmit knowledge despite the fact that an agent need not have any attitude towards MOORE-III, before he can be warranted in believing

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79 Similarly, as we saw before, Pryor takes Wright to be claiming that we require a tacit assumption that MOORE-III holds in order for MOORE-I to justify MOORE-II.
80 Note for instance, the similarities between Wright’s and Davies’s description of entitlement. Davies (2004: 230): “switching to the negative notion of entitlement, we could add that the thinker is entitled not to bother about, nor even consider, the possibility that his perceptual apparatus is not working properly” (my emphasis). How different is this from: “it may be that, for one reason or another, I am not required to bother about <the sceptical possibility>” (Wright 2000: 155)? Wright may not be so concerned with marking the distinction between having an attitude and not having an attitude, but it seems to me that he is quite open to the negative notion of entitlement as described by Davies. Nevertheless, he would consider it a form of warrant, warrant that one must have before it becomes rational to believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I.
MOORE-II. It may be that one needs to have a (propositional) warrant for believing
MOORE-III without MOORE-III being part of the justificatory basis for believing
MOORE-II.

This is perhaps not the most standard understanding of propositional warrant, but
it is not obviously false. Still, it is not the picture of propositional warrant that Davies and
Pryor are working with. Consider the following example from Pryor (2004: 353):

Suppose you’re reading some proof of the Pythagorean Theorem. H1 is the claim that you
understand and correctly follow the proof. Presumably, for you to be justified in believing the
theorem, H1 does have to be true. But you don’t need to have evidence that H1 is true. It’s the
proof itself that justifies you in believing the theorem. H1 is just some condition that enables this
to happen. It’s not itself one of the premises that your justification for believing the theorem rests
on—not even a suppressed, background premise. So the right treatment of H1 seems to be a non-
conservative one.

While I grant the fact that you don’t need evidence for H1 in order to be warranted in
believing the theorem, this is actually irrelevant. If warrant disjunctively covers evidential
justification as well as (non-evidential) rational entitlement, as Wright supposes, then
there’s still a question about whether you need to have warrant in H1 (of this latter sort)
in order to be warranted in believing the theorem. What is supposed to make this case
non-conservative is that H1 is not one of the premises that your justification for believing
the theorem needs to rest on; it is merely an enabling condition. Here, Pryor is not
arguing for a conservative treatment of the case. He is using it as an example that we’re
all supposed to agree on (for the purposes of illustrating the conservative / liberal
distinction). As it happens, there is a plausible way to understand this case
conservatively. It might be that you can have a justification for believing the theorem
without H1 being part of the justificatory basis, but not without H1 being warranted.
Pryor says that H1 is merely what enables us to have justification for the theorem. What
I’m claiming is that what enables us to be justified in believing the theorem is not only
that H1 is true, but also that we have a warrant for believing that H1 is true (in the form of
an entitlement), without it being at all part of the justificatory basis for the theorem. There
is clearly room for this in logical space, and there is nothing that Pryor and Davies have said which counts against it.

So the idealist position is that, where \( p \) entails \( q \), warrant fails to transmit from \( p \) to \( q \) whenever being warranted in believing that \( p \) on the basis of \( R \) requires that one be antecedently warranted in believing \( q \) without requiring that \( q \) needs to be part of the warrant for believing \( p \). Silins (2005) has considered something like this option on behalf of the idealist, but he finds it unsatisfactory.\(^8\) One complication that arises from engaging with Silins is that the condition of transmission failure just given is stated in terms of failure to transmit propositional warrant, but he wants to understand the issue entirely in terms of failure to transmit doxastic warrant via inference. Silins has two reasons for this. Firstly, he claims that “when we come to believe a conclusion on the basis of reasoning, one of our main goals is to acquire justification for believing the conclusion. It is not enough for the reasoning to leave us in the position of believing the conclusion, having some justification to believe the conclusion, yet not believing the conclusion on the basis of any justification” (2005: 75). Secondly, he insists that it is too demanding to define acquisition of warrant in terms of propositional warrant because we often acquire propositional warrant automatically, that is, without inference. For instance, if you warrantedly believe that Moby Dick is a whale and you know that whales are mammals then you automatically have propositional warrant for believing that Moby Dick is a mammal without inference and so the inference cannot provide you with a first time warrant to believe the conclusion, but it does, of course, allow you to warrantedly arrive at the belief, for the first time, that Moby Dick is a whale.

The problem with both of these considerations is that transmission failure does not necessarily have to occur at the level of inference. While ultimately what we want to know is whether there is anything wrong with coming to believing MOORE-III on the basis of valid inference from MOORE-II, we first need to determine whether MA has a legitimate justificatory structure, which is to specify a structure under which warrant

\(^8\) We should be careful with terminology here. Silins uses the expression ‘having a warrant for believing’ to mean what I mean by ‘having a warranted belief’ or doxastic warrant. What I mean by ‘having a warrant for believing’ is what Silins means by ‘having a warrant to believe’ or propositional warrant (though I sometimes use the latter expression as well to mean the same thing).
flows via entailment relations. The expectation is that the norms of belief formation somehow mirror or are parasitic on the rules for what makes an argument cogent.82

This confusion on the part of Silins severely limits the kind of defence of idealism that he allows himself to consider. The position he takes himself to be evaluating is that one cannot come to warrantedly believe that $q$, for the first time, by inferring it from a warranted belief that $p$ if having a warranted belief that $p$ requires that one have an independent warrant to believe that $q$, but does not require that $q$ be part of the doxastic basis for $p$. He thinks that this principle is highly unmotivated because the demand for independent warrant is set out as a demand for propositional warrant, but what one is supposed to fail to acquire for the first time is doxastic warrant, and it is not at all apparent why already having propositional warrant should prevent you from acquiring doxastic warrant. He takes the underlying thought behind the idealist position to be that no inference can yield a warranted belief that $q$ if one already has a warrant for believing that $q$. This is blatantly false, as demonstrated by the Moby Dick Case above, but it is also not what the idealist is claiming. The only thing that the idealist need claim is that in order to be propositionally warranted in $p$ one may need to be antecedently propositionally warranted in $q$ without needing $q$ to be part of the warranting basis for $p$, and that this suffices to block transmission of propositional warrant from $p$ to $q$. This has nothing to do with acquiring warrant via valid inference, for it is a claim about how warrant potentially flows via entailment relations. Nevertheless, I grant to Sillins that the idealist needs an explanation what is wrong with actually believing MOORE-III on the basis of the inference. The answer to that however, has nothing to do with the fact that one already has propositional warrant for MOORE-III.

I think it’s fair to say that Sillins’s criticisms are not entirely directed at the picture of propositional warrant that I’m proposing, and as such, my rebuttal to Sillins has not actually established that this picture is kosher. There may be other considerations against it. For now I’m going to put that issue aside because I would like to show that the only way in which it is even possible to have warrant for MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I is if the source of one’s warrant for MOORE-III has to be independent of its entailment from MOORE-II. In this case, if Davies is right that it can be possible to be

82 This is at least how I understand Davies and Pryor.
warranted in MOORE-II without having given MOORE-III any prior thought, then it follows that having a warrant for believing \( p \) can require you to have a warrant for believing \( q \) without requiring that \( q \) be one of the reasons that makes your belief that \( p \) warranted. Thus, even if there is something wrong with the picture of propositional warrant that I’ve proposed, the Moorean cannot benefit from it being wrong.

### 3.7 The argument for transmission failure

If you believe MOORE-II, then you are committed to believing MOORE-III whether or not you actually believe it. However, believing MOORE-II is not the only thing which commits you to MOORE-III. Treating MOORE-I as a reason for believing MOORE-II (which is something we do prior to actually believing it) *already* commits you to MOORE-III.\(^{83}\) Adopting Wright’s terminology (2004: 191), let us say that if a particular ‘cognitive project’ where an agent attempts to form a belief about \( p \) on the basis of \( R \) commits him to believing \( q \), then \( q \) is a ‘presupposition’ of that cognitive project. Now if you treat \( R \) as making it probable that \( p \), or more generally, as a reason for accepting \( p \), then you commit yourself to believing that \( R \) (or the source of \( R \)) is a reliable indicator of (whether or not) \( p \); obviously you also commit yourself to believing anything weaker than this. So if you’re treating MOORE-I as a good reason for MOORE-II then you’re committed to believing that MOORE-I is a reliable indicator of MOORE-II, or more generally that your experience is, within certain bounds, reliable. This, in turn, commits you to believing MOORE-III. I don’t think that Davies can deny this move, for it is precisely why MA fails to settle the question. You cannot remain open to MOORE-III while believing MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I precisely because you’re committed to MOORE-III by taking MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II.

By treating \( R \) as a reason for \( p \) I do not mean that you necessarily believe ‘if \( R \), then \( p \)’. To treat \( R \) as a reason for believing that \( p \) is to have a disposition to believe \( p \) should one have \( R \). Given this, one may wish to object that having a disposition to believe cannot itself commit you to any beliefs; only an actual belief can commit you to other beliefs. I think that this claim is empirically falsified. We sometimes form beliefs

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\(^{83}\) It should be clear that having a commitment to believe is not the same as having a background assumption or background belief. If one were to lack the conceptual resources needed to think about the BIV possibility this would not preclude one from being committed to believing it.
on the basis of experiences without conceptualising the fact that we’re treating our experiences as reasons for holding certain beliefs and even without believing that we have such and such an experience.\textsuperscript{84} In other words we can believe that \( p \) on the basis of \( R \) without believing \( R \). I take it that, unless one is being sufficiently reflective, this is the relation between MOORE-I and MOORE-II. At the same time, as we’ve already seen, if you were to believe that MOORE-III is false, or even withhold judgement about MOORE-III, then you would lose all inclination to believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I. I don’t know how else to describe this phenomenon other than that a certain disposition commits you to certain beliefs.

What I would like to claim is that if taking MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II commits you to MOORE-III independently of whether you actually believe MOORE-II, then in order for it to be rational to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, it must be rational for you to honour your commitment to believe MOORE-III independently of any potential inference from MOORE-II.\textsuperscript{85} If there is no such rational means of independently honouring your commitment to MOORE-III then your belief that MOORE-II will itself not be rational and so cannot provide a rational basis for believing MOORE-III. On the other hand, if there is, then you already have a rational basis for MOORE-III. So, either way, MOORE-II cannot provide a first time rational basis for believing MOORE-III.

There are three places in which the Moorean could try dispute to this argument. Firstly, he could deny that taking MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II commits you to MOORE-III. Secondly, he could instead deny that it needs to be rational for you to independently honour this commitment in order for it to be rational to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II. Lastly, he could claim that while it does need to be rational for you to believe MOORE-III independently of any potential inference from MOORE-II in order to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, this does not mean that an inference from MOORE-II to MOORE-III does not provide a first time rational conviction in

\textsuperscript{84} I’m not here claiming that we have a \textit{right} to form beliefs on the basis of experience without realising that we have such an experience, but only that we in fact do this.

\textsuperscript{85} Obviously it would be similarly inappropriate to honour this commitment by inferring MOORE-III from your belief that you have legs.
MOORE-III.\textsuperscript{86} I consider only the third way to be the least bit plausible, but I will address them all in turn.

It seems pretty clear to me that the first option is hopeless. In order to deny that taking MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II commits you to MOORE-III one would have to show that it’s possible to disbelieve or withhold judgement about MOORE-III while still rationally taking MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, which as Davies and Pryor admit, can’t be done. Here is a further consideration. Pryor (2000: 536) claims that your experience of having hands gives you prima facie justification for believing you have hands, however, in the absence of any defeating evidence, your experience gives you all things considered justification for believing you have hands. But suppose you were to acquire defeating evidence (say, you started hearing voices that you are a BIV). In this case you would no longer have justification for believing you have hands. What explains this change? If, before acquiring the defeating evidence, your experience of hands was good enough to justify you in believing that you have hands, and that experience hasn’t changed, what explains the fact that when you do acquire this further evidence, it is no longer true that your experience justifies you in believing that you have hands? The most natural answer is that your experience justified your belief only insofar as it was not inappropriate to be committed to believing that your experience is reliable, but in acquiring evidence against this, it becomes inappropriate to keep this commitment, so your experience can no longer justify your belief.

Can the Moorean deny that it needs to be rational for you to honour your commitment to believe MOORE-III (independently of a potential inference from MOORE-II) in order to take MOORE-I as a reason for believing MOORE-II? Now I agree with the Mooreans that in order to rationally take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, you need not actually believe MOORE-III, let alone believe it rationally\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{86} This third response by the Moorean springs out of Silins’s (2005) worry that the demand for independent warrant is set out as a demand for propositional warrant, but what one is supposed to fail to acquire for the first time is doxastic warrant, and it isn’t apparent why the two should conflict. My upcoming rejoinder will thus fulfill the promise to explain what is actually wrong with coming to believe MOORE-III via inference from MOORE-II.

\textsuperscript{87} I think that even most sceptics can agree that in order to rationally take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, you need not rationally believe MOORE-III independently of believing MOORE-II, but they would claim that it nonetheless needs to be rational for you to believe MOORE-III, independently of believing MOORE-II, whether or not you do believe it.
(we agree that you can’t disbelieve it or withhold judgement). What we disagree on is whether it needs to be rational to believe it, even though you may lack the belief. The Moorean could claim that if you don’t need to first rationally believe MOORE-III in order to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, then there is no reason why it should be rational to believe it at all. If, in order for it to be rational to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II you’re not relying on the belief that MOORE-III, how could you be relying on it being rational to believe MOORE-III? My response is that if the conditional is true – namely the conditional that ‘if you’re not relying on holding a certain belief, then you can’t be relying on there being a rational basis to have this belief’ – then the antecedent of the conditional is false. It is simply not feasible that you can incur a commitment to believe something, but have no rational route to that belief without having to give up whatever it is that’s incurring this commitment.88 In other words, if the conditional is true, then some form of scepticism is true, for none of us can rationally believe all the presuppositions of our cognitive projects, even if it is rational for us to believe them. I’ll shortly come back to the question of why one might think the conditional is true and how to resist those reasons.

Lastly, the Moorean could argue that even if there needs to be an independent rational basis for MOORE-III in order for it to be rational to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, this does not mean that you cannot gain a first time rational conviction in MOORE-III. After all, you don’t actually need to believe MOORE-III in order for it to be rational to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, so what can possibly be wrong with coming to believe MOORE-III for the first time by inferring it from MOORE-II? Picture this. You have an innate rational entitlement to believe MOORE-III in virtue of which it is rational for you to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II. However, you do not need to actually believe MOORE-III on this basis. You believe MOORE-II rationally in virtue of having an entitlement to believe MOORE-III (so MOORE-II is a candidate for transmitting warrant), but instead of coming to believe MOORE-III on the basis of that entitlement, you come to believe it on some other basis, namely the inference from MOORE-II. This is allowed – by the idealist’s own criteria – because you don’t

88 If the Moorean wishes to deny this point, as I suspect he might, then I have no idea how to continue to meaningfully engage with him.
need to actually believe MOORE-III (but it must be rational to believe it) in order for it to be rational to believe MOORE-II.

This argument assumes that every time you deduce something from an existing warranted belief, then the correct rational response is to go ahead and believe the deduced proposition. The assumption may well be false; you may be required to review your belief in the light of hitherto unforseen consequences. Now it is clear that when you believe \( p \) (let’s suppose without warrant, though you take yourself to be warranted), and you deduce \( q \) from \( p \), then coming to believe \( q \) without reviewing your justification for \( p \) is not necessarily the correct rational response. It might however be claimed that when a belief is in fact warranted, then there is nothing you could deduce from that belief which could require you to review the justification for that belief. It seems to me that this claim is equally false. If your belief is in fact warranted, then there is nothing you could deduce which would require you to improve your justification for that belief; a review however, may well be necessary. We acknowledge that even when a belief is warranted, it still needs to be reviewed in the light of new evidence. As Kripke has shown, this claim is far from easy to defend, but its intuitive plausibility rests on the fact that all of our beliefs are based on limited evidence. If your belief is in fact warranted, then any new evidence against it will be misleading evidence. This however is not something you can know in advance despite having a warranted belief. We should treat newly discovered logical consequences in the same way. Since we have a limited capacity to appreciate the logical consequences of our beliefs at any one time, our beliefs should, in principle, be open to review in the light of these newly discovered consequences. Just as we cannot know in advance that any new evidence which counts against our belief will be misleading evidence, so we cannot know in advance that any hitherto unforseen consequence of our belief is something that we have a right to be certain of. The difference between new evidence and newly discovered logical consequences is precisely that, if your belief is in fact warranted, new evidence can actually undermine your warrant (when the evidence is misleading), and so a review of your belief may actually require you to strengthen its

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89 I am referring to the paradox that if we know some proposition \( p \) then (by closure) we know that any evidence against \( p \) is misleading evidence, so absurdly we ought to shield ourselves from any potential evidence against \( p \). This thought is attributed to Kripke by Harman (1973: 148-149).

90 In this instance I have reverted to using the word ‘warrant’ in the factive sense, but nothing substantial seems to hang on this.
justification; a newly discovered logical consequence will never require this of you. If
your belief is indeed warranted then, by hypothesis, you will already have sufficient
reason to reject any proposition logically incompatible with your belief,\textsuperscript{91,92} but you
cannot know in advance that you have such sufficient reasons without explicitly
considering each particular consequence.

If I’m right that deducing MOORE-III from MOORE-II requires you to \textit{review}
your justification for MOORE-II in light of this newly discovered logical consequence,
then you would be doing something wrong if you do not recognise that you are
committed to MOORE-III not only because you believe MOORE-II, but also because you
have been treating MOORE-I as evidence for believing MOORE-II. As such you ought to
recognise that if you cannot honour your commitment to believe MOORE-III
independently of inferring it from MOORE-II, then you have to give up treating
MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II. Thus, for you to \textit{continue} to rationally believe
MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I you need to \textit{first} come to rationally believe
MOORE-III on an independent basis. I said earlier that you’re not required to believe
MOORE-III in order to take MOORE-I as a reason for believing MOORE-II, but it would
be more accurate to say that you’re not \textit{always} so required. When you are reviewing your
justification for MOORE-II in light of discovering that it entails MOORE-III, you incur
this requirement, and this happenstance prevents you from arriving at a rational
conviction in MOORE-III for the first time by inferring it from MOORE-II. Performing
the deduction may and sometimes will be what initiates the process that leads up to you
arriving at a first time conviction in MOORE-III, but it cannot be part of a rational basis
for a first time conviction in MOORE-III.

\textbf{3.8 Entitlements and the warranting basis.} This concludes my argument against the
Moorean. There is however an issue that still needs clearing up. Earlier I said that if
Davies is right that it can be possible to be warranted in MOORE-II without having given
MOORE-III any prior thought, then it follows that having a warranted belief in $p$ can
require you to have a warrant for believing $q$ without requiring that $q$ be one of the

\textsuperscript{91} I am presently assuming that closure holds.
\textsuperscript{92} Of course the contextualist will disagree with this, but I am currently arguing against the Moorean.
reasons that makes your belief that \( p \) warranted. At the same time I acknowledged that there might be something funny about this view, that while you don’t always need to believe MOORE-III in order to take MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II, you do need for it to be rational to believe it. One reason why one might be worried about this position is that it would be quite odd if having a warrant for \( q \) as one of the conditions that makes you warranted in believing \( p \) never required that \( q \) be part of the basis for believing \( p \). In order to block this consequence, there needs to be a principled way of distinguishing between those cases in which having a warrant for \( q \) is merely one of the conditions that make you warranted in believing that \( p \), and cases in which \( q \) must also be one of your reasons for believing \( p \). I think that this principle falls neatly out of the distinction between entitlements and justification. Let us take a closer look at this notion of entitlement.

Wright (2004) discusses four forms of entitlement the one that concerns us here is the entitlement of cognitive project. According to Wright (2004: 191-192), whenever a cognitive project is sufficiently valuable to us – in particular, if its failure would be no more costly than not engaging in it at all and success would be better – then we are entitled, without evidence or cognitive effort in general, to believe any presupposition \( P \) of this project for which:

(i) There is no sufficient reason to entertain doubt, and…

(ii) The attempt to justify this presupposition would, in turn, involve further presuppositions of no more secure a prior standing . . . and so on without limit; so that someone pursuing the relevant enquiry who accepted that there is nevertheless an onus to justify \( P \) would implicitly undertake a commitment to an infinite regress of justificatory projects, each concerned to vindicate the presuppositions of its predecessor.\(^93\)

\(^93\) This seems somewhat incomplete. Wright would surely admit that some presuppositions do not admit of any attempt at justification, and so it makes no sense to speak of them having further presuppositions. This is the case with global sceptical hypotheses like the BIV. So I would add onto (ii): ‘…or, there is no such procedure by which one can investigate the truth or falsity of this presupposition.’
The idea here is that by not taking such presuppositions for granted, we would be depriving ourselves the potential gain of this cognitive project, despite the fact that the cost (if any) of potential failure is no greater than the cost of not pursuing the project at all. Moreover, we cannot rationally secure the foundation of presuppositions when the investigation by which one might pursue such security has presuppositions of its own of no more secure a standing, so the only rational thing to do is to accept the presupposition without any special investigation.

Given that MOORE-III is a presupposition of the project of deciding to believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I, and it satisfies (i)-(ii), then for the purposes of this project you are entitled to just go ahead and believe MOORE-III without any specific justification. But not all presuppositions will satisfy (i)-(ii). A presupposition is any proposition that you are committed to in taking R as a reason for p. If I believe that the window is about to break because Tommy threw a rock at it, then I am presupposing that the window is fragile. This does not mean that I am entitled to believe that it is. Luckily I have very good evidence for thinking that the window is fragile, so I don’t need an entitlement to believe that presupposition.

My contention is that when we’re entitled to a certain presupposition then this presupposition need not be part of the rational basis of the belief for which it is a presupposition, but when it is a presupposition for which we need actual justification, then it must also be part of the rational basis, at least as a background premise. Suppose that you’re in a zoo which has a reputation for cleverly disguising some of its animals to look like others, and you know this. In this case, you are not entitled to believe that the animal in the pen (which looks like a zebra) is not a disguised mule (because there is sufficient reason for doubt), and so it is not automatically rational for you to believe that it is a zebra. Even if you possess the necessary capacity for discriminating between zebras and mules cleverly disguised as zebras, it is not rational for you to believe that the animal is a zebra unless you have gone through the cognitive effort of rejecting the cleverly disguised mule possibility.

In the original Zebra Case, there is no reason for thinking that the animal might be a disguised mule, and – let us grant for the time being – that investigating the truth of this presupposition would commit you to a host of other presuppositions of no more secure
standing.\textsuperscript{94} It also seems to me quite intuitive that in the original Zebra Case, being justified in thinking that the animal is a zebra does not require as part of the basis any premises about it not being a disguised mule, while in the modified Zebra Case it does. Thus using the distinction between justification and entitlement to distinguish between those cases in which the presupposition needs to be merely warranted and cases in which it must be both warranted and part of the basis for the belief in question squares with our intuitions about particular cases. Moreover, I think this principle is well motivated. If entitlements involve presuppositions which we’re not required to secure, no purpose is actually served by having beliefs in these presuppositions figure in the justificatory basis of the belief for which they are presuppositions. It would just be unnecessary effort.

3.9 Fixing up the norms for the project of deciding what to believe. If I’m right about all this then Davies’s account of what goes wrong in deciding to believe MOORE-III when MA is treated conservatively is incomplete, for it does not adequately capture cases in which having a propositional warrant for \( q \) is a condition of being warranted in \( p \), but need not be part of the basis. We can however, patch up the account by insisting that although there is nothing wrong with believing MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I without also having MOORE-III as part of the basis, something does go wrong when one infers MOORE-III from MOORE-II, and believes MOORE-III on that basis. What one ought to do, in the case of inferring MOORE-III from MOORE-II, is to review one’s justification for MOORE-II and thereby recognise that one cannot go on believing MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I until one comes to believe MOORE-III on an independent rational basis.

I do think that Davies has described the correct set of norms for the project of deciding what to believe for those cases in which the conclusion of our cognitive project is a presupposition that we are not entitled to believe without justification (i.e. the Soccer Case). What goes wrong in deciding to believe SOCCER-III on the basis of SOCCER-II does not occur at the point of this inference, but at the point when one decides to believe SOCCER-II on the basis of SOCCER-I. At that stage one already needs to believe

\textsuperscript{94} Actually I think this is false. In the next chapter I’ll outline my worry and suggest a tentative refinement, but sadly I do not offer a satisfying way out of the problem.
SOCCER-III. Otherwise SOCCER-I does not justify SOCCER-II. The Soccer Case differs from MA in two respects. Firstly, as just noted, SOCCER-III needs to be part of the justificatory basis for SOCCER-II (perhaps merely as a background belief), while MOORE-III need not be part of the justificatory basis for MOORE-II unless it is out in the open. Secondly, SOCCER-I does count as evidence for SOCCER-III, unlike MOORE-I for MOORE-III, and this is why the Soccer Case does settle the question, while MA does not. We can however, imagine cases where the Type-I proposition cannot justify the Type-II proposition without having the type-III proposition as a premise, but where the Type-I proposition does not count as evidence for the Type-III proposition. Consider our earlier modification of the Zebra Case, where you know that the zoo sometimes disguises some of its animals to look like others. In this case, your visual experience as of a black and white striped equine does not justify the claim that the animal is not a disguised mule, but you do need to justifiably believe that before your visual experience can count as evidence for believing that it is a zebra.

I agree with Davies that there are two epistemic projects, that of deciding what to believe and that of settling the question. Davies says that in the project of settling the question we must begin by holding the conclusion as open pro tem. In virtue of this, he considers the project of settling the question to be more ambitious than the project of deciding what to believe. I disagree that the project of settling the question is the more ambitious one because I hold that in the project of deciding what to believe we must also consider the conclusion as open. Since we only have a limited capacity to appreciate the logical consequences of our beliefs at any one time, we cannot assume that our beliefs will always entail something that we have a right to believe just because they are so entailed. If this is true, then whenever we deduce a proposition from an existing belief, we must review our justification for that belief in the light of this newly discovered consequence. Consequently, for Davies to deny that in the project of deciding what to believe the conclusion must also remain open, he has to insist that we must hold our existing beliefs fixed. We must only care about what follows from our existing beliefs without considering what any newly discovered consequence can reveal to us about our existing beliefs. But in so doing we’d effectively only be assuming that our beliefs are warranted, and so if these are the norms for the project of deciding what to believe then
the question about *transmission* of warrant should not even arise. In this case we should believe the conclusion not because we have a right to believe the premises, but because we *take ourselves* to have a right to believe the premises. While it is true that we should believe the conclusion of any valid argument insofar as we take ourselves to have a right to believe the premises, this does not mean that we should believe the conclusion all things considered. We do not necessarily have a right to believe the conclusion; we only have a right to take ourselves to have a right to believe the conclusion. Perhaps this is a plausible psychological story of what takes place in actual reasoning, although I doubt it. Regardless, if we adopt my suggested norms for the project of deciding what to believe, then MA doesn’t transmit warrant. On the other hand if we stick with the norms suggested by Davies, then MA *still* doesn’t transmit warrant, because it is not the kind of project by which warrant can be transmitted.

### 3.10 Concluding remarks.

In this chapter I have shown that we cannot come to know the falsity of sceptical hypotheses on the basis of inferring them from our commonsense beliefs and that this is true independently of whether closure holds. The debate between the Moorean and the idealist has been confounded by a mistaken assumption (on the part of the Moorean) that if having a warrant for believing \( q \) is one of the conditions that makes one’s belief that \( p \) warranted, then it must be part of the *basis* that warrants \( p \). As soon as we deny this assumption, the Moorean has no motivation to treat any Type-4 arguments in a liberal rather than conservative way.

I also take myself to have cleared up some peripheral issues to do with transmission of warrant. The Soccer Case, for instance, is a case of transmission failure, but my diagnosis of this failure is considerably different from Wright’s.\(^95\) Moreover, this diagnosis reveals that some arguments can settle the question about their conclusion, without it being appropriate to decide to believe the conclusion on the basis of the premises.

Lastly, I have introduced Wright’s notion of entitlement, which I take to be a vital ingredient in solving scepticism without incurring the kinds of problems faced by the

\(^95\) My diagnosis of the Soccer Case is still motivated by the same considerations that motivate Wright, namely the information dependence of warrant.
modal distance theories considered in chapter 1. However, unlike Wright, I do not consider entitlements to be a form of warrant, at least not in the sense that warrant is normally taken to play in knowledge. To be entitled to believe a certain proposition does not allow us to know that proposition, but it is part of what allows us to know other propositions. On this understanding of entitlement, knowledge will not be closed under entailment. The next chapter is largely devoted to showing why we should understand entitlements in this way.
Chapter 4
The New Case Against Closure

4.1 Entitlements versus modal distance. In chapter 1 we saw that modal distance theories of knowledge, whereby one only has to rule out some close set of worlds in order to be said to know, run into serious problems, both in sufficiency and necessity. For the safety theory (as well as modal contextualism) the sufficiency problem is most striking, because the theory grants knowledge of any modally robust proposition to a subject who has absolutely no reason to believe that proposition. This was seen as a particularly bad consequence because the major motivation for going with safety is that it allows us to know the falsity of sceptical hypotheses, but the principle by which it allows us to know the falsity of sceptical hypotheses is precisely what results in very easy knowledge of all other modally robust propositions. The sensitivity theory however, suffers from a similar kind of problem in sufficiency, as revealed by the Horse Race Case and modified versions of the Grandma Case. In these cases, although the subject does have reason to believe the proposition in question, intuitively he does not have enough of a reason. This is because in these cases there are some counter-possibilities which are not close enough to the actual world to be considered relevant alternatives on the sensitivity criterion, but which on some intuitive understanding of relevance, ought to count as relevant. Both theories also appear to be too strong. The Drinking Water Case does not intuitively rob us of knowledge, even though there are very close not-\( p \) worlds where one still has the same reasons for believing that \( p \). So there are two kinds of problems for any modal distance theory. Firstly, there are cases where a certain counter-possibility to \( p \) is not close to the actual world, and is also not a sceptical possibility (i.e. it is not at all bizarre nor is there systematic deception), but where one has no evidence against it. Intuitively such counter-possibilities do undermine knowledge. Secondly, there are cases where even though a particular sceptical scenario is not true, it is very close to being true. Intuitively in these cases we still have knowledge (at least of mundane propositions).

I’m going to propose a new theory of knowledge which avoids these problems. This theory utilises Wright’s notion of entitlement as a new way of distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant alternatives. As a first pass, let us say that you know that
$p$ only if you believe $p$ on the basis of evidence which rules out all alternatives that you’re not entitled to ignore.

Obviously this proposal is in need of serious elaboration, but we can easily see how it could be an improvement on any modal distance theory. Take, for instance, cases where the sceptical hypothesis is not actual, but very close to being so, such as the Drinking Water Case. In Chapter 1 we concluded with Neta and Rohrbaugh that I know I am drinking pure unadulterated water despite the fact that there is a very close possible world in which I am instead drinking toxin water which looks and tastes exactly like the water I am actually drinking. Assuming that Wright’s notion of entitlement holds good, this would still count as knowledge. There are no possibilities in this case which your evidence cannot rule out, and which you do not have an entitlement to ignore. The possibility that you’re drinking water out of a just-opened-bottle which contains a poison you cannot detect is not a possibility which you have any reason to consider actual, nor is it a possibility that you can plausibly investigate, where the presuppositions of that investigation would somehow be more secure. Now consider the Horse Race Case. We concluded with Martin that you don’t know that Gumshoe won the race, because you cannot rule out the possibility that Tagalong won instead, despite the fact that the closest world in which Gumshoe loses, is not a world where Tagalong wins, and so it is not a world where you receive the payout. On the theory I’m proposing a world where Tagalong wins instead of Gumshoe is not a possibility that you are entitled to ignore. Firstly, you have very good reason for thinking that Tagalong won, just as much as you have for thinking that Gumshoe won, and moreover, if you were to investigate whether or not Tagalong won, the presuppositions of that investigation would indeed be more secure than the mere assumption that Tagalong didn’t win. Thus, on the face of it, the theory I’m proposing lines up with our intuitions in precisely those cases where any modal distance theory founders.

On the face of it, this proposal is a lot more demanding than any modal distance theory. It requires that we rule out a lot of alternatives that these other theories consider irrelevant, namely worlds that aren’t close to the actual world. This should not worry us. Most worlds that are distant from the actual world can easily be ruled out by your evidence (if you in fact know), for these are worlds in which your experiences would be
vastly different from the way they actually are. The only distant worlds that need worry us are worlds where our experiences remain the same, but naturally, these are sceptical worlds, and if entitlements can do the job they’re meant to do, then those worlds do count as irrelevant on the present proposal.

4.2 The limitation of Wright’s characterisation of entitlements. Let us now consider how the basic proposal ought to be revised and elaborated. One immediate worry with the proposal is that the notion of entitlement, as described by Wright, does not adequately confine which possibilities need not be ruled out. Consider, for instance, the Zebra Case. One of the presuppositions of knowing that the animal is a zebra is that it is not a cleverly disguised mule. It seems fair to say that there is no sufficient reason for thinking that it is a disguised mule. There is however a worry that investigating this presupposition would not incur presuppositions of its own of no more secure a standing. If, for instance, we closely examined the animal, and found no evidence of tampering with its appearance, then we shall incur such presuppositions as that our senses are not radically deceiving us, that the disguise uses methods that are too technologically advanced to detect on mere inspection and so on. But arguably these types of presuppositions are more secure than the claim that no one has painted black and white stripes on a mule. While it is certainly implausible that this latter claim is false, it is surely less implausible than that our senses are radically deceiving us. Thus we can accept Wright’s account of entitlement as sufficient, but we need more conditions to account for cases like this.

I will suggest two plausible avenues of refining the notion of entitlement to account for this problem, although I am not entirely satisfied with either. One way might be to appeal to the pragmatic value of doing the investigation via the expected utility framework. If there is a certain cost for being wrong about $p$ and a certain cost for investigating one’s presuppositions for believing $p$ on the basis of R, then you are entitled to make those presuppositions without the investigation if the expected utility of performing the investigation is less than or equal to the expected utility of not performing the investigation. The major problem with this suggestion is that there are many cases where there is no cost associated with being wrong about $p$ because one can believe $p$ without intending to use this belief in practical reasoning. It would be wrong to suggest
that when there is no potential cost of being wrong about \( p \) then we automatically know that \( p \). There might of course be some innate cost in being wrong about \( p \) not associated with any consequence of acting on \( p \). This is to appeal to the not unfamiliar notion that truth is valuable in and of itself. However, while this notion has some intuitive pull, it is surely also very mysterious.

There is perhaps a more promising route, which is also closer to the spirit of Wright’s original idea. For Wright, it is irrational to grant that we need to investigate (some of) our presuppositions because in doing so we commit ourselves to investigating the presuppositions of our investigation, and so on indefinitely, unless we can foresee arriving at presuppositions which are somehow more secure than those of the initial project. I have suggested that in the Zebra Case, we can envisage arriving at presuppositions that are more secure than the presumption that the animal is not a cleverly disguised mule. However, if we grant that we need to investigate this presupposition then we ought to also grant that we need to investigate the presuppositions of all our other beliefs where that investigation promises to yield an equally small or smaller increase in security. Such a commitment can be considered problematic for very similar reasons as it is problematic to commit oneself to an infinite regress of investigations. I imagine that we have countless beliefs whose justification presupposes claims that we could investigate for an equally small gain in security as investigating the presupposition that the animal is a cleverly disguised mule. Consequently, a commitment to investigate every presupposition of this kind would be a practical impossibility.

This idea still needs considerable fleshing out, which is not something I can pursue here. The major problem with this view is that it would reward agents who willy-nilly acquire countless beliefs with poor justification, making presuppositions that intuitively they have no right to take for granted. If we consider each belief in isolation there would, of course, be a great increase in security if they chose to investigate any of those presuppositions. However, when we consider their whole set of poorly justified beliefs, the task of investigating each and every of those presuppositions would also be a practical impossibility, but of course we would not wish to claim that for this reason they have no obligation to investigate any of their irresponsibly held presuppositions. For this idea to be plausible, we need to consider what an agent would do if he were fully rational,
but physically limited like us; an agent who does not form beliefs willy-nilly, but nor
does he have the power to investigate all of his presuppositions for which the
investigation promises an increase in security. At some point there will be a \textit{threshold} in
just how little security an investigation will yield such that to engage in all investigations
that yield an equally small or smaller increase in security will be a practical impossibility.

\textbf{4.3 Putting entitlements to work in the relevant alternatives framework.} Despite the fact
that Wright’s notion of entitlement runs into problems – which at this stage I don’t know
exactly how to resolve – the problems are fairly local. With respect to traditional types of
sceptical argument, Wright gives a plausible and workable response. It is useful therefore
to see what a theory of knowledge that makes use of entitlements would look like, putting
aside for the time being the issue of how to extend entitlements to the Zebra Case and
others like it (though I will assume that entitlements do reach to these cases). The task for
the remainder of this essay is to spell out just what a theory of knowledge which makes
use of entitlements must look like.

Wright (2004) makes common use of the verb ‘knows’, but he does not offer any
kind of analysis, nor explain how knowledge connects with entitlements, justification, or
warrant in general. My first pass at a definition was that to know that \( p \) requires that we
rule out all alternatives that we’re not entitled to ignore. Obviously this is no where near
to being sufficient. For one, it is possible to rule out all alternatives to \( p \) that we’re not
entitled to ignore, despite the fact that \( p \) is false. I take it that if I really am a BIV, then I
am still entitled to ignore that possibility for the purposes of believing that I have hands
(so perhaps I am justified in believing that I have hands), but I still don’t know that I do.
Consequently, one necessary refinement to the theory is that any such alternative must be
false. Let us say that if you are entitled to ignore a possibility which is in fact false, then
you are \textit{happily} entitled to ignore it.

Problems remain. Suppose that you are sitting in front of a fire while having a
very vivid dream that you are sitting in front of a fire. Do you, in this case, know that you
are sitting in front of a fire? Intuitively you do not, but which alternative are you not
happily entitled to ignore in this case? You are not, of course, happily entitled to ignore
the possibility that you are dreaming, but this is not an \textit{alternative} to your purported
knowledge. There is a very similar possibility which is an alternative – namely that you’re dreaming while not sitting in front of a fire – but this is an alternative that you are entitled to happily ignore: this possibility is false, and any attempt to investigate this possibility would incur presuppositions of its own of no more secure a standing. Or consider the fake-barns case. Intuitively Henry doesn’t know that there is a barn before him, but he is happily entitled to ignore the possibility that the thing before him is a barn-façade. Of course he is not happily entitled to ignore the possibility that he is in an area with lots of barn-facades, but this possibility is compatible with there being a real barn before him. This then suggests another refinement to the theory. In order to know that \( p \) one needs to be happily entitled to ignore not only the alternatives to \( p \) that are left un-eliminated by one’s evidence, but also all of the alternatives to \( R \) being a reliable indicator of \( p \) in the circumstances one is actually in. If you are dreaming, then your experience is not a reliable indicator of you sitting in front of the fire (in just about all circumstances). Similarly, if you’re in fake-barn country, then your experience does not reliably indicate barns, (in those particular circumstances). And even though you’re entitled to take for granted that you’re not dreaming and that you’re not in fake-barn country, you’re not happily entitled to do so. Thus if you believe that \( p \) on the basis of \( R \), you know that \( p \) only if \( R \) is incompatible with all alternatives to \( p \) that you are not happily entitled to ignore, and only if you are happily entitled to ignore all alternatives to \( R \) being a reliable indicator of \( p \).\(^{96}\) Strengthening the theory in this way does not deprive one of knowledge in the Drinking Water Case. Seeing as the spiteful bystander won the lottery, and so did not poison your water with a colourless, tasteless poison, your evidence still reliably picks out water in this circumstance, and so you’re happily entitled to ignore the possibility that it doesn’t; mutatis mutandis for the Lottery Evil Deceiver Case.

\(^{96}\) There will be a fair bit of overlap between these two sets. In particular when you know that \( p \) on the basis of \( R \), then every alternative to \( p \) that you are happily entitled to ignore will also be an alternative to \( R \) being a reliable indicator of \( p \). However, it is possible that you fail to know that \( p \) because there is some alternative to \( p \) that you have not ruled out, nor are you entitled to ignore it, despite the fact that you are entitled to ignore every alternative to \( R \) being a reliable indicator of \( p \). These are cases when \( R \) reliably indicates that \( p \), but not conclusively. If you hold one ticket in a lottery draw of one thousand, then you have good reasons for thinking that you won’t win the lottery, and you are entitled to ignore all possibilities of them not being reliable reasons, but still you are not entitled to ignore, nor do you have evidence against, the possibility that your ticket wins.
I have given here a theory of knowledge, but this framework can easily be used to define justification as well. All we have to do is take away the requirement of being happily entitled to ignore a possibility. Thus, whether or not Henry is in fake-barn country, he is fully justified in believing that there is a barn because he believes this on the basis of evidence which rules out all alternatives that he is not entitled to ignore, and furthermore, he is entitled (but not happily so) to ignore the possibility of his evidence not being reliable. We can also use it to explain partial justification. I am 99.9% justified in believing that I will lose the lottery where I have one ticket in a draw of one thousand because my evidence rules out 99.9% of all alternative possibilities to losing the lottery that I am not entitled to ignore (a rigged lottery being a possibility that I am entitled to ignore for example).

4.4 Entitlements, warrants, knowledge and closure. How should we understand the notion of warrant in relation to knowledge? There are two potential issues of divergence here. Firstly, there’s a question of whether to be warranted in believing, say, that you have hands, you need to be merely entitled or happily entitled to believe the presuppositions of taking your experience as a reason for that belief. The former would make warrant wholly internalist (call it warrantint), while the latter introduces an external constraint (call it warrantext). It is quite plausible, therefore, that a warrantedext belief counts as knowledge. I don’t think we need to make a choice about which of these is properly denoted by the word ‘warrant’. The more interesting issue is whether entitlement should be considered a form of warrant. The verdict we give on this issue will determine whether warrant and (insofar as warrant is connected to knowledge in the way just described) knowledge are closed under entailment.

It is clear that Wright thinks that entitlements are warrantint (and he would presumably be happy to say that happy entitlements are warrantext). Thus for him warrant is closed under entailment, and so presumably knowledge is too. However, there are passages in Wright (2004) which strongly suggest that knowledge is not closed. Consider (2004: 208):
I am right now in possession of a plethora of perceptual knowledge concerning occurrences around me…but in order to be able to know that [this claim] is true, I need (this is a closure step, of course) to be able to know the presuppositions of its truth, some of which—we are taking it—sceptical argument has put beyond evidence. So scepticism demands the surrender of higher order knowledge—the claim to know that we know.

Presumably the closure step to which Wright is referring is that since ‘I know that M’ entails that the presuppositions of my justification for M are in fact true, then to know that I know requires (by closure) that I know that these presuppositions are in fact true. However, the moral of the passage above is that we actually don’t know whether the presuppositions of our first-order knowledge are true. This is what Wright wants to grant to the sceptic, without granting that we have no right to claim first-order knowledge. But clearly, to grant this much requires giving up closure. At least some of the presuppositions of our justification for M, particularly the ones that have been the focus of this essay, are also consequences of M. So if we don’t know that we know that M, and this because we don’t know that the presuppositions of our first-order knowledge are true, but we do know that M, then knowledge is not closed.

Or consider how Wright (2004: 209) proposes to deal with the following paradox. Let M be a mundane proposition that we purportedly know, and ~SH be one of the anti-sceptical presuppositions of our justification for M:

(1) If we run a risk in accepting ~SH, then we run a risk in accepting M.
(2) We do run a risk in accepting ~SH.
(3) We know that M.

Wright accepts that knowledge is incompatible with risk, so he takes (1)-(3) to form an inconsistent set. He proposes to resolve this inconsistency by rejecting (1). The idea being that while we do take a risk in taking our presuppositions on trust, to be entitled to do so is to be entitled to claim that we do not take a risk in accepting M. That is, if we have a right to claim that our cognitive faculties are working properly, then what we’re claiming is that we do not take a risk in believing their deliverances. Still, assuming this is right,
closure for knowledge must fail. Seeing as \(~SH\) can be a consequence of \(M\), and if knowledge is indeed risk free, then to reject (1) is to reject closure for knowledge.

Now admittedly Wright never says that knowledge is closed, but only that warrant is, so perhaps he simply ought to reject closure for knowledge while keeping it for warrant. The first and relatively minor problem with this is that Wright has to reject the theoretical connection between warrant and knowledge. The bigger problem is that Wright takes himself to be disagreeing with deniers of knowledge closure such as Dretske and Nozick. For instance, in (2003) Wright distinguishes between transmission of warrant and closure of warrant, citing Dretske (1970) as denying the latter and then claiming that he himself is sceptical whether there are any genuine counterexamples to closure. But Dretske makes no remarks about a failure of closure for warrant, only a failure of closure for knowledge. Consequently if Wright takes himself to be disagreeing with Dretske, he must be treating knowledge and warrant as roughly equivalent, at least with respect to closure.

I consider ‘warrant’ to be a theoretical term, and thus up for grabs. In Chapter 3 I agreed to use ‘warrant’ to denote that which makes it rationally appropriate to believe a proposition. I did so because the question of whether some interesting epistemic property transmits via entailment does not directly bear on the issue of what is known. Seeing as we’re once again interested in knowledge, I will now use the word ‘warrant’ to mean something which is intimately connected with it, namely what in section 2.5 I called evidential warrant. You have evidential warrant for \(p\) when you have sufficient evidence to know that \(p\) (though you may lack other things). However, I want this notion to now be understood as also being intimately tied in with entitlements. It is impossible that \(R\) provides sufficient evidence for knowing \(p\) if you are not entitled to reject every proposition incompatible with \(R\) being a reliable indicator of \(p\). Whatever it is that prevents you from knowing \(p\) if you’re evidentially warranted in \(p\) it is not a failure of entitlement.\(^{97}\)

With this stipulation in hand we still have a substantive question about closure, namely whether knowledge, or more fruitfully, whether evidential warrant (henceforth

\(^{97}\) Thus, ‘evidential warrant’, as I’m now using the expression, is partially stipulative and partially substantive. The substantive part is that entitlements are connected to knowledge in the way I have proposed (and I am now taking for granted that they are).
just warrant) is closed under entailment.\(^98\) On this issue Wright is either confused or he denies closure, but naturally it is open to others to keep closure. With regards to the (1)-(3) paradox, a proponent of closure could either reject (2) or adopt some form of contextualism. I, of course, intend to deny closure. On this view an entitlement to believe \(q\) can be a necessary condition for having warrant in some other proposition \(p\), without itself being a form of warrant for \(q\). Thus, if \(p\) entails \(q\), and \(\neg q\) is incompatible with your reasons for \(p\) being reliable, and \(\neg q\) is indeed something that you’re entitled to reject without evidence, then this entitlement is a part of what makes you potentially warranted in \(p\), but it is not itself a warrant for \(q\). The claim for which I intend to argue is that if we wish to employ the notion of entitlements in a theory of knowledge, then denying closure is the most natural way to go. More to the point, on the assumption that using entitlements in roughly the way I’ve proposed gives us the right theory of knowledge then there is a new case to be made against the closure principle.

4.5 Three ways of understanding entitlements. So far the conditions for knowledge that I have proposed are neutral with respect to whether being entitled to believe a proposition is enough to give us knowledge of, or warrant for, that proposition, and therefore also neutral with respect to closure. In order to settle that question we need to decide exactly how entitlements work. We have three options:

1. \textit{Entitlements are always relative to a particular cognitive project.} I take it that anyone who buys into the theory I’m proposing will agree that entitlements are always entitlements to believe what is presupposed by a particular cognitive project. The natural extension of this fact is that for the purposes of assessing whether a subject knows that \(p\) on the basis of \(R\), the only propositions he may be entitled to believe are the presuppositions of that particular project. It makes no sense to say that \(S\) is entitled to believe \(q\) if \(q\) is not a presupposition of taking \(R\) as a reason for \(p\), despite the fact that \(q\)

\(^{98}\) It is more fruitful to ask whether evidential warrant rather than knowledge is closed under entailment because as we saw in section 2.6, defining closure in terms of evidential warrant instead of knowledge avoids a whole host of problem. In this chapter I will talk about knowledge closure interchangeably with closure of evidential warrant, because those problems for knowledge closure are fairly innocent once we’re clear on the distinction between knowledge and evidential warrant. I am not clear on what needs to be added to evidential warrant in order to have knowledge, but this gap does not strike me as relevant for the issues I’m dealing with.
is a presupposition (which S is indeed entitled to believe) of some other project whose success or failure is not at issue.  

2. Entitlements shift depending on what error possibilities are salient. This comes in two varieties: what is salient to the attributor of knowledge or the subject of the knowledge attribution. According to the former, if a possibility is salient to the attributor of knowledge, then it is a possibility that the subject has an obligation to rule out. According to the latter, it is only the possibilities that are salient to the subject himself that incur in him the obligation of being ruled out. Thus, on both views, having an entitlement to ignore a possibility can be defeated by the salience of that possibility.

3. Entitlements are neither relative nor do they shift. This is just the denial of the two options above. It says that if you believe $p$ on the basis of R, and this commits you to $q$, then assuming you’re entitled to believe $q$, you’re entitled to believe $q$ no matter what cognitive project is being assessed, and no matter what is salient to either the subject or attributor. (Note that this view does not claim that you can be entitled to believe a proposition even when it is not a presupposition of any cognitive project, but only that if it is a presupposition of a project that you are entitled to believe then you’re entitled to believe it regardless of which project is being assessed; more on this below).

These three options for the way entitlements might work correspond to the three views of relevance that I sketched in the introduction. Option one is a ‘proposition relative’ view of relevance, option two is a ‘shifty’ view of relevance, and option three is the ‘rigid’ view of relevance. If we combine our foregoing theory of knowledge with the ‘proposition (or project) relative’ view of entitlements then it turns out that we don’t know the falsity of sceptical hypotheses, despite the fact that we know mundane propositions, and so closure fails. While you are entitled to believe that you’re not a BIV for the purposes of assessing whether you know that you have hands on the basis of your experiences, you are not entitled to believe that you are not a BIV for the purposes of assessing whether you know that you’re not a BIV (on whatever basis). Thus, when assessing whether you know that you’re not a BIV there is an alternative that you’re not entitled to ignore, which is also not ruled out by your evidence. If we invert this

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99 This is not to suggest that someone must actually be asking the question whether or not S knows that $p$ in order for there to be a fact of the matter about whether or not S knows that $p$. 

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reasoning then according to the ‘rigid’ view of entitlements option three, you do know that you’re not a BIV because there aren’t any alternatives that you’re not entitled to ignore, hence no alternatives that need to be ruled out by your evidence, so closure does hold. Lastly, if we go with the shifty view of relevance, then for familiar reasons you know both that you have hands and that you’re not a BIV when the BIV possibility is not salient, and you know neither when it is salient, so closure holds across contexts.

4.6 The case for entitlements being project relative. In section 1.5 I put forward an argument against not only the modal distance species of the shifty view, but also against shifty views of relevance in general. The shifty view, like any other relevant alternatives account, needs to give a principled account of why some possibilities can while others cannot be ignored when salience is not at issue. This is precisely what entitlements give us. The problem I raised for the shifty view is that it is not apparent why such a principle is not enough to know mundane propositions in contexts where a previously irrelevant possibility has now become salient. Why, for instance, can’t we say that we do know that we have hands, seeing as we’re entitled to ignore the BIV possibility? This is particularly pressing if, indeed, we adopt the entitlements view of relevance. It is simply not apparent why entitlements, as I’ve described them, are things that one can lose with the tide of salience. As far as I can tell, the salience of an error possibility has no normative force that plausibly connects with our entitlement to reject that possibility without evidence (but see Epilogue). In general, the best motivation in favour of any kind of shifty view is that our intuitions about particular cases of knowledge attribution do fluctuate in accordance with the salience of error possibilities. However, it seems to me that once we make it explicit that, for example, we are entitled to reject the BIV possibility without evidence, then our inclination to judge that we don’t know that we have hands becomes severely reduced.

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100 Perhaps salience has normative force over the conversational score, but not on what one ought to believe. Moreover, if salience can have normative force over the conversational score, there is no reason why making salient our entitlement to reject certain error possibilities without evidence cannot bring the score back in favour of the anti-sceptic.

101 However, I expect that this only works for people who feel the normative force behind the notion of entitlements. If you do not agree that we are entitled to not have to rule out sceptical hypotheses, then you are unlikely to lose your inclination to judge that you don’t know that you have hands when the BIV possibility is made salient.
Regardless of whether you’re persuaded by this more or less general argument against the shifty view, I will now offer three arguments directly in favour of the project relative view of entitlements, which have equal force against the shifty and the rigid view of entitlements. The first two of these arguments depend on a certain view I have about the way entitlements are meant to work. This view of entitlements is compatible with both the shifty and the rigid view, so it is not patently biased, but combining it with anything other than the project relative view gives us counterintuitive results. Here is how I understand entitlements. If we are (sometimes) entitled to take our presuppositions for granted, this does not mean that we are entitled to take for granted these propositions when they do not figure in as presuppositions for any of our reason based beliefs. If I’m taking R as a reason for believing M courtesy of presupposing ~SH, and I am entitled to accept ~SH without evidence, this does not mean I am entitled to accept ~SH without evidence when it is not a presupposition of taking R as a reason for believing M. Such a view would go against the spirit of entitlements. Remember that what initially motivates the need to take such claims on trust – putting aside the question of the permissibility of so doing – is that if we did not take them on trust we would be depriving ourselves of the potential benefit of the cognitive project, despite the fact that there is no cost in engaging in it. And clearly, this element is necessary for the permissibility of taking such claims on trust if this notion of entitlements is to be at all interesting. For if I am entitled to believe that I am not a BIV simply because there is no investigative procedure by which I could arrive at a more secure epistemic position with respect to that proposition, without this being one of the presuppositions of any of my cognitive projects, then I would similarly be entitled to believe that I am a BIV, for here too no investigative procedure would give me a more secure epistemic position with respect to that proposition. It seems to me that no matter how externalist your leanings, if your (internal) epistemic position with respect to p is no better than your (internal) epistemic position with respect to ~p, then you do not know either. So if entitlements are to contribute to epistemology (understood broadly as the ethics of belief) in an interesting way, namely by giving us a principle for choosing between p and ~p, then one can only be entitled to believe certain propositions when they are acting as presuppositions. This claim is compatible with all three options. For all I’ve said, you may still be entitled to believe that ~SH even for the purposes of assessing
whether you know that ~SH, provided that you do in fact presuppose ~SH in taking R as a reason for M. However it seems to me that it is in principle possible for you to *stop* treating R as a reason for M, in which case, since you would not longer need to presuppose ~SH, you would cease to be entitled to believe ~SH. This now gives us two reasons to prefer the project relative view.

Firstly, suppose I know some proposition $p$ merely in virtue of being entitled to believe it. If $p$ stops being a presupposition for some project, and thereby stops being an entitlement, then it ceases to be known. This means that whether or not we know some proposition $p$ is hostage to the supportive role that it plays with respect to our other beliefs. Intuitively however, whether or not a belief counts as knowledge does not at all depend on the support it *provides*, but rather on the support it *receives*. This intuition is violated unless entitlements are always relative to a particular cognitive project.

Secondly, in 2.2 we saw that REP is the only plausible intuition in support of closure, but a theory of knowledge which makes use of entitlements cannot help itself to REP. According to REP, if a reason R is strong enough to guarantee M, then R can’t fail to guarantee anything entailed by M. A modal distance theorist can easily appeal to REP as a way of defending closure. On the safety theory if R guarantees that M is true throughout all the nearby worlds in which you have R, then obviously R guarantees the truth of anything entailed by M throughout all the nearby worlds. Moreover, you could *stop* treating R as a reason for M, and R would *still* guarantee the truth of anything entailed by M. However, entitlements cannot allow for this. If R guarantees that M then it does so in virtue of you being entitled to presuppose ~SH without you having any evidence for ~SH. Suppose that someone claims that R itself is evidence for ~SH. Can you know that ~SH on the basis of R? If you have a standing entitlement to ~SH (i.e. non-project relative), then R in fact rules out all the possible worlds that you’re not entitled to ignore, for there aren’t any such worlds. The problem with this is that, again, if you stop treating R as a reason for M, then you lose your entitlement to believe ~SH, but it seems highly implausible that whether or not R is good enough to guarantee ~SH should turn on whether you treat R as a reason for some other proposition. The status of whether having R warrants you in believing ~SH should be independent of what else you take R to be a reason for believing. Thus, what I consider to be the most plausible closure
supporting intuition does not sit well with a theory of knowledge based on entitlements. More generally, even if you don’t stop treating R as a reason for M, R cannot really be a reason for ~SH because it does not contribute to the credibility of ~SH above and beyond your entitlement to believe it. However, an entitlement to believe that \( p \) does not in any way contribute to the likelihood of it being true and this conflicts with the intuition that to know \( p \) one’s credentials for \( p \) must somehow be conducive to its being true. Entitlements are what allow our reasons to be truth conducive, without being truth conducive themselves.

The last argument I have in support of the project relative view does not depend on the story given above about how entitlements work. Rather it appeals to the intuition that if you know that \( p \), then in some sense your epistemic credentials for \( p \) are as good as they get. Now for many of our presuppositions that we are entitled to trust, while there may be no point in trying to gain evidence in their favour (given that the evidence would depend on presuppositions that are equally unstable), there is nothing which precludes us from doing so (Wright 2004: 189). However, if you do engage in this activity, say, by checking to make sure that the Zebra is free of disguise, or that your eyes are working properly, etc, there is a distinct sense that you have improved your epistemic credentials towards these propositions. One could retort that if this is true, then just as you have improved your epistemic credentials towards one of these presuppositions, you have also improved your epistemic credentials towards the propositions for which they are presuppositions (you’ve ruled out more alternatives to what you purportedly know). So if the intuition that knowledge is incompatible with improvement of epistemic credentials can show that we don’t ordinarily know the presuppositions that we are nonetheless entitled to trust, then it must similarly show that we also fail to know whatever it is that they are presupposition for.\(^{102}\) The criticism makes a fair theoretical point, but I don’t think that the basic intuition is undermined. If you set about checking that the animal in the cage is free of disguise, then for the purpose of knowing whether or not it is a zebra, it seems like you are wasting your time. You may be improving your epistemic situation in some theoretically laden sense, but you’re not making your belief that the animal is a

\(^{102}\) Thank you to Jonathan Schaffer for pressing this objection.
zebra any more rational. On the other hand we don’t feel like you would be wasting your time in checking that the animal is free of disguise for the purpose of knowing whether or not it is free of disguise. What explains these intuitions? The most natural answer is that ‘the animal is free of disguise’ is a presupposition of your justification for ‘the animal is a zebra’, but it is not a presupposition of your justification for itself, at least not a presupposition that has any chance of qualifying for an entitlement. If your justification for believing that the animal is free of disguise is so poor as to be reliable only if it is presupposed that the animal is free of disguise, then you have very good reason to doubt that your reasons are reliable, which disqualifies you from being entitled to that presupposition.

I have given here three considerations in favour of the project relative view of entitlements. This view has the consequence that if $p$ entails $q$, and $\neg q$ is incompatible with your reasons for $p$ being reliable, and $\neg q$ is indeed something that you’re entitled to reject without evidence, then this entitlement is what allows your reasons to warrant believing that $p$, without itself providing a warrant for $q$. I submit then that we have here a new case against the closure principle.

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103 This is assuming, of course, that we can extend entitlements to the Zebra Case. However, even ignoring that, there is no reason why we the same point cannot apply to some case which does not threaten the notion of entitlements in the way that the Zebra Case does.
In section 3.7 I claimed that when you recognise that MOORE-III follows from your belief that MOORE-II you ought to recognise that if you cannot honour your commitment to believe MOORE-III independently of inferring it from MOORE-II then you have to give up treating MOORE-I as a reason for MOORE-II. Thus, for you to continue to rationally believe MOORE-II on the basis of MOORE-I you need to first come to rationally believe MOORE-III on an independent basis. Now Wright believes that a thinker need not himself establish that he has certain entitlements in order to enjoy them, just as we do not normally demand that a thinker needs to accomplish a justification for the use of a rule of inference before he can rationally put that rule of inference to use. A problem still remains: what are we to say about a thinker who recognises the entailment from his belief that MOORE-II to MOORE-III, but does not recognise that he has an entitlement to accept MOORE-III without evidence and therefore believes himself to lack a rational basis for accepting MOORE-III?

This phenomenon can be used to motivate a kind of shifty view. However, if one accepts everything else I’ve said about entitlements, then the shifty view it points towards is considerably weaker than the traditional kind. According to this alternative shifty view a typical subject knows that M in contexts where SH is not salient, and fails to know it in contexts where SH is salient. However an enlightened subject – a subject who realises that he is entitled to ignore SH – does know that M even in contexts where SH is salient. This is a possible response to the problem I raise, but I don’t think it is the only, or even the best response. The view I prefer – though it is beyond the scope of this project to give it a proper defence – is that a subject who does not recognise that he has an entitlement to ignore SH, but who nonetheless goes on to believe that SH is false, is not being irrational. He may not consider himself rational in believing that SH is false, but that does not mean that he isn’t. Now given that he considers himself to lack a rational basis for not-SH, he may refuse to commit himself to it, and similarly refuse to commit himself to M, but this is an attack on knowledge at the level of belief; he still has a rational basis for not-SH and a warrant for M. Similarly, it seems plausible to say that a thinker who considers himself
irrational in using modus ponens because he knows that he lacks a justification for the use of that rule is also not irrational. At the very least, such a thinker can’t be any less rational than the thinker who uses modus ponens unreflectively, without considering whether he is justified in so doing. However to deny that the latter thinker is rational is simply to reject that we have the kinds of entitlements that Wright says we do. Such a denial is not on the table at this stage of the dialectic.

If this is all correct then we have here the makings of a resolution to the Sceptical Paradox. Cohen (1988: 94) has insightfully noted that “a satisfying resolution requires an explanation of why the paradox arises—an explanation of why we have the intuitions that saddle us with the paradox.” Put another way, we need an explanation of how it is that the Sceptical Conclusion can seem so bizarre to us, while his premises seem so plausible. The shifty view attributes the paradox to the shifting salience of error possibilities. However, as I pointed out in section 1.5, this solution has its limits, for even in the sceptical context, while we are inclined to think that we fail to know M, we’re also simultaneously pretty sure that we do know M. My alternative diagnosis of the paradox (which was already hinted at in the end of section 1.5) is that it arises out of the tendency to consider ourselves an authority on our own rationality. If S believes that p, but does not recognise having any rational basis for believing that p, then – understandably – he would be inclined to think that he is not rational in believing that p, even if in fact he is. Thus, since S recognises that if he lacks a rational basis for accepting that SH is false then he fails to know that M, and since S is inclined to think he isn’t rational in believing that SH is false, he is thus also inclined to think that he doesn’t know that M.104 At the same time S does take himself to know that M. Perhaps he even senses that he doesn’t need to rule out SH in order to rationally believe M. However, since he cannot explain why he feels he doesn’t need to rule out SH, his hesitation and befuddlement is quite understandable and perhaps even rational. Therein lays the paradox.

In this essay I have rejected a number of ways of dealing with the Sceptical Argument, but I have not conclusively shown that appealing to entitlements is the only way to avoid scepticism. I have however shown that this account squares better with our

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104 I think that similar considerations can explain why abominable conjunctions sound abominable. The claim that I don’t know that I am not a handless brain in a vat suggests that I am not rational in believing that I am not, which conflicts with the claim that I know I have hands.
intuitions about knowledge attribution in comparison to the currently very popular modal distance accounts of knowledge, and moreover that it leads towards a very appealing resolution of the sceptical paradox. My main task however, was to develop a new case against the closure principle. In important ways, this new case connects with Dretske’s (1970) original case against closure. It is through Dretske’s intuitions that Wright comes to conceive of the Moorean Argument as a case of transmission failure, and it is the inappropriateness of the Moorean response that leads Wright to appeal to entitlements as a way out of scepticism. The present work, however, has sought to establish that the application of entitlements to the relevant alternatives account of knowledge leads us back towards denying knowledge closure.
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